

BENGAL PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE 1918

HOOGHLY SESSION

Compiled by
Yatindrakumar Ghosh

FIRMA K. L. Mukhopadhyay
Calcutta

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FOREWORD

When the Bengal Provincial Conference met at Hooghly in 1918, the first world war had completed one full year. This war, between the Allies and the Axis, was considered a war between the democrats and the autocrats. But the democrats had two faces, democratic at home and autocratic in colonies. However, this other face of the autocrats was lost to the Indians who joined the war, expecting that by contributing to the defence of democracy in Europe they would win self-government in India. The British promised the same but as the later years revealed, they were promising false things. India, who had contributed a million men in the war, one hundred million pounds apart from a huge individual contribution in aid of charities, got nothing in return from the British rulers.

The 1918 Conference was being held in the shadow, or perhaps according to the contemporary Indian mood we should say, in the glow of this perfidious world war. The Bengalis as much as the rest of the Indians were expecting benevolence as a reward. As Babu Surendranath Banerjee, who can be considered the spirit of the Bengal Provincial Conferences till then, said, the Bengalis or to be more fair, the educated Babus of Bengal were duped by the idea that Mr Montagu, the English Minister, was considering handing over a bundle of reforms on a platter.

over to the Indians. In fact Babu Surendranath announced in the Conference that India would be given self-rule any moment.

It now seems obvious that the 1918 Conference should have been as tame as it was. The number of delegates attending was small and the enthusiasm it invoked was smaller. The British by promising reforms had taken the wind out of the patriotic sails of the Congressmen and the Conference-wallahs.

But objectively seen, 1918 was a crucial one. It was the year of internment, when hundreds of young people were taken into jails or police custody, on charge of revolutionary activities. It was so great an injustice, making young people prisoners without trial that the major resolution of the 1918 Conference had to be on the issue of internment. It must be however remembered that the Conference had no love for the revolutionaries. All that it had said was that innocent people, not connected with revolutionary activities, were also being harassed. It did not justify the revolutionaries, although the President of the Conference made a fine argument in favour of the idea of revolution. This love for revolution without the revolutionaries was the hallmark of the Provincial Conferences. The natural result was an effeteness. The Conference was a nice hot package of words.

To understand this contradiction of the Conference, 1918 is pre-eminently an ideal one. Symbolically, it ended on a note of quarrel among the Conferencewallahs themselves, which later developed into a quarrel among mode-

rates and extremists. The extremists were coming up and the moderates were losing influence on the Conference. Symbolically we said because the argumentation in the Conference was becoming a piece of sophistry, a semantic quarrel, when India was being bled white to feed the war machine.

December 25, 1927

Yatindrakumar Ghosh

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BENGAL PROVINCIAL CONFERENCE 1918

The Bengal Provincial Conference met at Hoogly at 1 p. m. on Saturday the 30th March, 1918. For months past the people of Hoogly and Chinsurah were up and doing making preparations for a successful session of the Conference. The heart and brain of the local people were unceasingly at work and well might the organisers congratulate themselves on the excellent arrangements they made for holding the Conference.

Mofussil delegates arrived by the morning trains. The President-elect and many delegates came by the 10 o'clock train. The Hon'ble Mr. Surendranath Banerjea joined the party at Seoraphuli. Among the Mofussil delegates we noticed Rai Jadunath Mazumdar Bahadur (Jessore), Babu Hardayal Nag (Chandpur), Babu Manomohan Neogy (Mymensingh), Babu Kalidas Roy Chowdhury , (24-Parganas), Babu Becharam Lahiri (Nadia), Babu Bipinbihari Ghosh

(Malda), while Calcutta was represented by the Hon. Mr. Surendranath Banerjea, Babu Matilal Ghosh, Bai Yatindranath Chowdhuri, Babu Surendranath Roy, Babu Jitendralal Banerji, Mr. B. K. Lahiri, Babu Saradindu Roy, Mr. J. Choudhuri, Babu Satyananda Bose, Babu Golaplal Ghosh, Babu Pijushkanti Ghosh, Prof. Lalitchandra Das, Hon'ble Moulvi Abdul Kasam, Mr. I. B. Sen, Babu Satyendranath Bose, Mr. A. N. Choudhuri, Dr. J. N. Ghosh, Mr. S. P. Roy, Babu Gopikrishna Kundu, Babu Sasisekhar Bose, Mr. Nisith Sen, Dr. Promothanath Chowdhuri, Babu Tincowrinath Bose, Mr. Sundaram Iyer and many others.

On arrival the President-elect was received by the Chairman of the Reception Committee and Volunteers. A procession of carriages was formed and it proceeded to the pandal. Excellent arrangements were made for the accommodation of the delegates.

A pandal of fairly large proportions standing in picturesque isolation on the Maidan facing the barracks in the classic town of Chinsurah—a Union Jack proudly floating over it in the breeze—was the tenement of the year's Provincial Conference, which commenced its sittings on the 30th March. As you entered in, the mantram 'Bande Mataram' woven on cloth, waved its secret welcome, graceful in design, graceful in execution, with its neat adornment of

draperies, its well arranged dais and auditorium and rostrum—the whole thing spoke of artistic beauty. A goodly row of punkhas, thoughtfully improvised and industriously pulled did much to soften the rigour of the grilling summer heat.

The Chandernagore Volunteers arrived in a body and were greeted with shouts of 'Bade Mataram.' It was worthy of note that there were several lady delegates in the assembly.

Chairman's Address

The proceedings began with the song of 'Bande Mataram', the whole assembly standing up and remaining on its legs so long it was sung. An ode of welcome in Bengali specially composed for the occasion and set to music followed, and when its strains had died away, the Hon'ble Rai Mahendra-chandra Mitra Bahadur, Chairman of the Reception Committee rose amidst cheers and welcomed the delegates in the following speech :—

Brother and Sister Delegates,

Nine years ago we had the honour and privilege of welcoming most of you in our midst in one of the most troublesome and momentous periods in the history of our national life and to-day we are in no less important period. For, shortly we expect a pronouncement from the Government which it is hoped will

usher in a new epoch in the history of this country. We meet at a time when great enthusiasm prevails amongst young men throughout the length and breadth of our country to fight side by side with British soldiers, ready to shed their blood for the defence of the British Empire.

We all know that special importance attaches to this session of the Conference. We are now in the midst of a world conflagration when those unseen forces which shape the destiny of nations are making them pass through the ordeal of adverse circumstances to smelt away their dross in the crucible of trials and temptations. A readjustment of the Empire will follow entailing changes in the administration of India—reforms for which the time is ripe and of which the recent pronouncement of the Crown and the present visit of the Secretary of State are clear indications. It is certainly time that changes were introduced in the administration to suit the new conditions : — .

“New conditions teach new duties, time makes ancient good uncouth ;

They must onward still and upwards who would keep abreast of truth ;

Speaking of the war I recall the words of His Excellency the Viceroy—“We are still engaged in the momentous struggle which began in August 1914, and we are realising as never before in India what war

means in relation to our public and individual lives." "The Empire", said His Excellency, "is still calling upon her sons for their help." And have we, who are proud to be called her sons, behaved as the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear? Have we been idle spectators in this struggle between barbarism and civilisation? Those of us who have read the report of the Bryce Committee cannot help endorsing the opinion of the present Prime Minister of Great Britain that if Germany wins "we shall be vassals, not to the best Germany, not to the Germany of sweet songs and inspiring noble thought—not to the Germany of science consecrated to the service of man, not to the Germany of a virile philosophy that helped to break the shackles of superstition in Europe—not to that Germany, but to a Germany that talked through the rancorous voice of Krupp's artillery, a Germany that has harnessed science to the chariot of destruction and of death, a Germany of philosophy of force, violence and brutality, a Germany that would quench every spark of freedom either in its own land or.....In March 1916 Lord Hardinge said—"It was a proud moment for England when His Majesty's Indian Forces marched the streets of Marsailles in all the panoply of war ready to take their place in the Empire's fighting line. It was a proud moment still for India, for then for the first time she found herself shoulder to shoulder with

the mother country in the battle-fields of Europe standing for a righteous cause and cementing by the blood and sacrifice of her sons a brotherhood in arms not only with the mother-country but also with the Allied nations of Europe." In his statement on the Mesopotamia Commission he said that he had trusted the people of India and they had fully justified his confidence. Every province has since been straining every nerve to help the Empire with men and money. Indians have proved themselves eager to vindicate the manhood of the nation and uphold the honour of the Empire. In Bengal we have not, I am proud to say, been found wanting. Far be it from us to boast of services willingly rendered in the cause of the King and the Empire, but we cannot help regretting that even now the doors of the Army have not been thrown wide open for us and we are still kept beyond the charmed enclosure of commissioned ranks in the Army. That is a stigma brand on our brows. And the removal of that stigma will surely help recruiting in India from the intellectual classes.

This reminds me of another obstacle in the way of rapid recruiting in Bengal. My friend Mr. Bhupendranath Basu referred to it in the council of the Governor-General. "The arrests", he said, "of hundreds of our young men, some of them of unblemished life and of unimpeachable character, the searches of the houses

of innocent citizens in many instances, leading to nothing, absolute ignorance of the public of the causes that led to these arrests and subsequent internments, have cast a shadow over my province and chilled the ardour of its youth." These internments have given rise to a feeling in our people which is deplorable. The result of the policy of the Government has been described by Sir Rabindranath Tagore in his own inimitable style—"The natural outcome of this policy is a widespread panic which paralyses the innocent, whether in their efforts of self-advancement or to render public service. In this unnatural state of things it has become difficult for us to maintain our accustomed relations with those whom we do not know well, with the further disastrous result that both hospitality and charity have succumbed to an all-pervading suspiciousness." So long we had been told by the officials that every case of internment was decided upon after mature consideration by the highest officers of Government. But the case of the Sindhubalas gave the lie direct to that assurance and revealed a state of affairs of which every civilised government should be ashamed. The attempts of the Governments of Bengal and India to whitewash this deed of high-handedness have failed and the system, responsible for the arrest of those two innocent ladies, stands self-condemned. I am glad, my countrymen have realised

their responsibility in the matter and formed a Committee of Safety which would safeguard the rights of the people. That men like Dr. Rasbihari Ghosh and Sir Binodechandra Mitra have joined the Committee is proof positive that Bengal is determined to guard those rights which belong to her people as citizens of the British Empire. I consider it exceptionally fortunate that the Government of India have realised the danger of allowing the people to think that the liberty of none of them was worth a moment's purchase. They have practically accepted Babu Surendranath Banerjea's proposal to appoint an advisory committee to enquire into each case of internment. We accept this concession with thanks but urge that the old and absolute method of condemning men unheard should be done away with altogether. The proposed committee should consist of members well-known for independence. Otherwise the object of the Government of India would be frustrated. I am sure, my friend the Hon'ble Babu Akhilchandra Dutt, your President-elect, who has made a special study of the subject, will speak on it and I don't like to stand long between you and your President.

I will now speak a few words on other subjects that are agitating the public mind just now.

Education is a subject on which all of us feel strongly.

It is a reproach to us that in India the percentage of literacy should be as low as about 10 in males and 1 in females. The enormous mass of Indian ignorance is deplorable. In the General Report on the Castes in India, an attempt has been made to make the Brahmins of India partially responsible for the small impression that has hitherto been made on Indian ignorance. "The second influence antagonistic to a more general spread of literacy," says the Report, "in the long continued existence of a hereditary class whose object it has been to maintain their own monopoly of all book learning as the chief buttress of their social supremacy. Sacerdotalism knows that it can reign over none but an ignorant populace. The opposition of the Brahmin to the rise of the writer castes has been already mentioned, and the repugnance of both, in the present day, to the diffusion of learning amongst the masses, can only be appreciated after long experience". This remark is hardly fair. And it is a significant fact, which even Sir John Strachey has been constrained to admit, that "in parts of India there have been, from time immemorial, considerable numbers of village and local schools, in which instruction of a very elementary kind is given. It has also been admitted that in Bengal and in Madras the existing system of primary instruction originally started from the indigenous schools. They gave

elementary education no doubt—but education (1) in the power of observing, (2) in accuracy (3) in the difficulty of ascertaining truth, (4) in proceeding from the knowledge of what is proved to the thinking of what is probable. In short the education imparted was such as to make a man fit for further progress, such as to inspire him with a desire to seek knowledge not only as a means of livelihood, but as a means of life. The change of ideal brought about by western culture was disastrous to the interest of that knowledge and the official system of imparting education was hardly suited to the conditions of the province. But even now people are eager to take advantage of primary schools, wherever they exist. Unfortunately their number is inadequate and their equipment deplorable. In Bengal in 1916-17, 44·56 per cent of the male population of school age were at school and 8·58 per cent of the female. The disparity is certainly depressing. The total expenditure on public instruction was Rs. 2,56,78,348 of which public funds, fees and private sources contributed respectively 40,44 and 16 per cent. There were 32 Arts Colleges educating 17,226 pupils. The expenditure on them was Rs. 17,78,910 of which Rs. 9,07,887 was from fees. There were 627 High Schools for boys with 199,934 pupils. The expenditure on them was Rs. 49,85,898 of which Rs. 38,50,905 was from fees. The number of primary schools for

boys was 31,617 with 11,24,468 pupils. The expenditure on them was Rs. 37,40,499 of which Rs. 17,95,596 was from fees. So the amount which came from the students represents the desire of the poor people in the villages for education. It will appear that for 31,617 schools the local Government and the local bodies between them paid only Rs. 19,45,103 or a little over Rs. 5 per school per month. Only the other day the Hon'ble Rai Sitanath Roy Bahadur one of Bengal's representatives in the Imperial Legislative Council drew pointed attention to this fact and asked the Government, if this grant was sufficient to attract really competent men to diffuse the fertilising waters of knowledge from their great and copious fountain-heads by a thousand irrigation channels over the whole length and breadth of the land. I repeat the question and ask the Government if a more substantial portion of the surplus shown in the Budget should not be spent on education. No Government should raise revenue for the purpose of hoarding money and whenever surplus is achieved it should be spent either in reducing taxation or on schemes of social reforms and the development of beneficial services. The people are the real masters of the country and it is the duty of every government to educate them so as to make them realise the responsibility of their position and the value of their rights.

Sanitation

Then we turn to Sanitation. Years back Sir W. W. Hunter in his brilliant book on Orissa wrote that in no country does the public health more urgently demand the aid of the science of sanitation than in India. But his voice was like a voice crying in the wilderness. The vast demand upon the revenue for more visibly needed public works did not leave sanitation a chance. The condition of the country grew from bad to worse—construction of roads without reference to the natural drainage of the country, aggravating the situation and depopulating prosperous villages. This went on for years till the seriousness of the situation could no longer be overlooked. In the Bengal Census Report of 1911 we read—"Year by year fever is silently at work. Plague slays its thousands, fever its tens of thousands. Not only does it diminish the population by death, but it reduces the vitality of the survivors, saps the vigour and fecundity and either interrupts the even tenor or hinders the development of commerce and industry.

Malaria

A leading cause of poverty—and of many other disagreeables in a great part of Bengal is the prevalence of Malaria. The Government of Lord Carmichael took the matter in hand and experimental schemes were

formulated to uproot the great killer of Bengal. Mr. Bentley was on special duty and we are eagerly awaiting the results of his experiments on which large sums have been spent. Only the other day His Excellency the Governor of Bengal assured us that he had decided to tackle this problem, and in advancing three drainage schemes which his Government had adumbrated for the acceptance of local bodies, said—"Every year there occur in Bengal from 3,50,000 to 4,00,000 deaths from this cause alone. But a mere enumeration of the deaths gives but a faint idea of the ravages of the disease. It is probable that at least hundred attacks of Malaria occur for every death, and it is estimated that this disease alone is responsible for 20,00,00,000 days of sickness in the Presidency every year." Surely this state of affairs cries louder for remedy than anything else. And the uprooting of Malaria in Bengal is more important than the partitioning of Midnapur and Mymensing districts and the building of a new winter capital for India near the old, historic but deserted capital of dynasties that strove for supremacy in India establishing states of great magnificence which rose upon the historic vision, faded and passed away leaving but memories of splendid achievements and dazzling opulence. Add to the ravages of fever the ravages of that scourge of mankind Cholera and you cannot help saying that the needs of the province in

the domain of sanitation cannot be exaggerated. And both Malaria and Cholera are preventible diseases and not visitations of Providence over which man can have no control. What has been done in other places can be done in Bengal. Malarious places have been converted into healthy localities and busy lives of human labour. The sanitary condition of Hooghly has been considerably improved by the supply of filtered water. The question of water supply in rural areas can no longer be neglected. This conference has repeatedly drawn the attention of the Government to it. I remember that as far back as 1901 the conference at Midnapore under the presidency of the late Mr. N. N. Ghosh passed a resolution recommending the supply of pure drinking water in rural areas. At first the attitude of Government was one of indifference. Then came a period of passive interest followed now by a policy of active work. In 1904 the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province made a definite promise through his Secretary that if in any case the Local Authorities would contribute one-third of the cost, and the public another third, the Government would contribute the remaining third up to a maximum of Rs. 5,000 for any one district, and of Rs. 50,000 for the whole province. That sum was wholly inadequate. But that was the first step and even then the Government of Bengal was constantly trying to shift its

burden in this matter to the shoulders of the Zeminders. Then came what is known as the Fraser Circular which was another step in advance. After that the Government were busy partitioning and re-partitioning Bengal and the redistribution of territories left them little time. After the unsettling of Lord Morley's "settled fact" Lord Charnmichael the first Governor of Bengal sought earnestly to solve the problem. In October 1912 he appointed a committee to consider the question of the improvement of the Rural Water-Supply in Bengal. When opening the conference on Water-Supply His Excellency spoke as follows—
"During my tours in Eastern Bengal, one of the main subjects of conversation of those who came to see me, was the need of a pure water-supply in rural areas. I need not dwell on the importance of the subject, for the fact that you are here, is evidence that you realise it yourselves: but what struck me most was that among those gentlemen who were most interested in the subject, there was little unanimity as to the best method of tackling the problem.

"I felt, therefore, that before I could attempt to do anything to improve matters, it was necessary to get together those gentlemen who had talked with me and others who had shown their interest and to ask you to discuss the problem amongst yourselves and so to focus to some extent popular opinion on the subject.

The object of bringing you together is not to discuss controversial points as to the best means of providing money, but to discuss the best way of tackling the problem of providing rural districts with a pure water-supply." The Resolution on the subject was issued in November 1912. That Lord Carmichael was in earnest was evident from the fact that in addition to the Road Cess the entire amount of the Public Works Cess was made over to the District Boards. And what was more on the 14th October, 1915 the following communique was issued "Government have recently had under their consideration the question of expenditure by District Boards of the grants on account of Cess to be placed at their disposal during the current year. In view of the Agricultural stress experienced in certain parts and the comparative cheapness-of labour, it is hoped that these funds will be largely devoted to the much needed improvement of excavating tanks in rural areas. It is believed that thereby immediate employment will be found for local labourers, while a lasting betterment of rural conditions will be effected at a minimum cost. District Boards have been advised where circumstances justify the concession, to dispense with the contributions usually expected from the locality in which tank is excavated." Unfortunately the expenditure of the Board on the the improvement of rural

water-supply has not been proportionate to the additional amount placed at their disposal. But the responsibility does not rest entirely with the delinquent Board. The O' Malley circular has defeated the object of the Government. The evidence given in the communique had evidently fallen on unheeding ears and the conditions with which attempts had been made to saddle grants had precluded the possibility of the Boards fully and freely utilizing the sums placed at their disposal. Fuller powers must be given to the local bodies to spend money on works of public utility. Everywhere members should be empowered to elect their chairman and the incubus of the commissioner should be removed—the chairman being placed in direct contact with the member-in-charge of the Department. That will be the proper step to take in the matter and one that will be consistent with the policy of granting us responsible Government.

Septic Tanks

In this connection I would say a few words on the effect of the Septic tanks of the mills situated on the banks of the river Hooghly. I cannot pretend to be a scientist. But it is common-sense that when the contents of these tanks are not properly purified their discharge into the river is a source of great danger to public health. And the prevailing opinion is that the

prevalence of cholera in riparian areas is in many cases, the effect of the pollution of river water due to the discharge of the contents of these tanks. The discharge of the contents of these tanks also outrages the feelings of the people. And it is a matter on which all deeply feel especially because in most villages drinking water is drawn from the river for want of supply of filtered water.

Proper drainage in villages is often obstructed by the silting up of rivers and canals, as also by the indiscriminate construction of roads. The construction of roads should never be taken in hand without due consideration.

Floods of the Damodar

The floods of the Damodar and the Ajaya are a source of danger to the people of the division and people expect the Government to adopt a more vigorous policy in precluding the possibility of periodic ravages from the rivers breaking the 'bunds' and washing away villages. These floods also impair the sanitary condition of the villages.

Industrial Development

The needs of the country in the domain of industries are so varied that I will not detain you with an expression of opinion on them. We are all agreed

that without industrial development the poverty problem of the province cannot be solved. Swadeshi gave an impetus to that development. If there have been failures that need not dishearten us. Failures are not only sign-posts pointing towards the direction in which we ought to go but guides to see us safely started on our journey. The great lesson that these failures have taught us is the lesson of caution. We should be careful in the choice of industries and in the choice of men. Without expert knowledge and proper organisation success cannot be achieved. The people should be trained and no one should be allowed to make what is not his profession his business. We should establish business schools and technical institutions. Even agriculture—that universal but insecure industry is neglected. The work of the Agriculture department is far from satisfactory. Now that the free trade fallacies exposed and exploded we hope the Government will adopt a policy of protection for fostering Indian industries and making India independent of foreign countries in the matter of her needs. In Bengal we had prosperous industries. An attempt should be made to revive them where possible and establish new industries wherever necessary. We decline to accept the opinion of those economic oracles who say that India is destined to remain a mere producer of raw materials for the industries of other

countries. India has awakened to a consciousness of her own greatness and her own inherent capabilities. She feels that she possesses qualifications of commercial and industrial success greater even than Japan—vast populations of industrious and intelligent workers, immense undeveloped tracts of cultivable land, ample products of every useful kind, cheap and efficient labour in the masses, with much commercial ability among the educated classes * * *

Her educated classes demand, and rightly demand, protection for her nascent industries. Rebuffed and irritated by British “free-trade” fanaticism they are blindly groping after some alternative form of protection in the shape of Swadeshi—a voluntary abstention from the use of commodities not made in India.” We are ready to suffer sacrifices for success. The slow realisation of our ambition need not and should not dishearten us.

Responsible Government

I now pass on to the subject which is now agitating not only Bengal but the whole of India. Responsible Government has been promised us and the Secretary of State is now busy giving finishing touches to a scheme of reform which I understand has been drawn up. By the establishment of responsible government in India, Great Britain will, we are sure, fulfil her mission in the East. It was bound to come. In his

first Budget speech. (1906) Lord Morley recognised the New Spirit in India. He said : “Everyone—soldiers, travellers and journalists—they all tell us that there is a new spirit abroad in India. Be it so. How could you expect anything else ? You have now been educating the people for years with Western ideas and literature. You have already given them facilities for communication with one another. How could you suppose that India could go on just as it was when there was little higher education, and when the contact between one part and another was difficult and infrequent ? How could you think that all would go on as before ? * * * We should be untrue to all the traditions of this Parliament and to those who from time to time and from generation to generation have been the leaders of the Liberal Party, if we were to show ourselves afraid of facing and recognising the New Spirit with candour and consideration.” Lord Minto who now stands revealed in the new light of Lord Morley’s Recollections—he also could not shut his eyes to the awakening wave that was sweeping over the country overwhelming old traditions and bearing on its chest a flood of new ideas. It is doubtful if the manner in which he attempted to meet the restlessness of a new-born and advancing thought was commendable. But there is no gainsaying the fact that Lord Morley and Lord Minto attempted to meet that thought.

Unfortunately the Reforms they granted did not go far enough. They forgot that even good government can never be a substitute for Government by the people themselves. Self-government is the birth-right of every people and it is England's greatest and noblest achievement that she has taught us to claim that birth-right. There is no mincing matters. We want self-government within the Empire and India will not be satisfied with anything less than that. It is no longer a distant ideal to be achieved after generations—but the ideal is before us and within easy reach. We have been called impatient idealists. But has patience no limit? Self-government was granted to the Boers within a few years of their subjection by the British. And we in India who had willingly placed the sceptre in the hands of the British more than a century and a half before now are we not yet fit to be granted self-government? It has been said that the present is not the opportune time to press our claims. What about Ireland? Speaking in the House of Lords, Lord Curzon said—"Ireland indeed presented two faces. One was turned towards the battlefield with all the chivalrous ardour and personal courage for which the race was always conspicuous, and which never shone with brighter lustre than during this war. The other face was averted from the struggle, was still playing upon its ancient wrongs, still conspicuous of the British

Government and still declining to join whole-heartedly in the supreme effort of the United Anglo-Saxon race." A united and reconciled Ireland—he said—would be an important addition to the strength of the cause of the Allies. Cannot the same thing be said of India? Surely it will add to the strength of the Empire and the cause of civilisation to have a united and reconciled India as a self-governing part of the great British Empire. The time is most opportune and we hope and trust the British Government will rise to the occasion and not deviate from the path of duty that lies clear before it. We speak this with the full sense of responsibility and speak out. Parnell, the uncrowned king of Ireland once said—"No one has the right to limit the aspirations of a people." And in our case, we only aspire about our birth-right. We only yearn after a natural condition of things. We only claim our proper place in the Empire to which we are proud to belong—the Empire which has fought for liberty and is still engaged in war as the champion of weaker nations—the Empire that stands unshaken "broad-based upon the people's will."

Concluding Remarks

I am now passing down the vale of years and the shadows of evening are deepening upon me. I am glad that to-day I find around me so many of my

countrymen—so many young men consecrating their lives to the service of the Mother. Our duty is not done by a conference—for the service of the Mother is our “whole existence.” Year in year out we must work till the goal is reached. That goal is no longer far away. The dream of Indians living as a nation has been realised. We have not lived in vain—nor strove in vain. We have seen our claims to fight for the Empire recognised. Our young men have won distinction in the fields of battle and some of them have come back covered with glory. We are now on the threshold of getting responsible government. I appeal to the young to prove worthy of the occasion. We have to support with the memories of the past, the needs of the present and the hopes of the future. Show yourselves worthy of the task. Acquit yourselves like men.

In conclusion, Brother Delegates, allow me once again to extend to you the right hand of fellowship and welcome you in the name of the Reception Committee.

Bande Mataram.

Election of the President

The Hon'ble Mr. Surendranath Banerjea in proposing the Hon'ble Babu Akhilchandra Datta to the Chair said:

Mr. Chairman, brother delegates, ladies and gentlemen,—

I have been asked by the organisers of the Conference to place before you a resolution which, I am sure, will meet with your unanimous and enthusiastic support. I beg to move—and this is no formal motion as in the case of the election of the President of the Congress—I beg to move that the Hon'ble Babu Akhilchandra Datta be elected President. Gentlemen, in standing on this platform on this occasion and in speaking to this motion I desire to utter a personal complaint. I do not know why it should be my lot on every occasion when the election of the President is gone through, to propose him to the chair. I have been trying to divine the reasons. They seem to me to be of twofold character. In the first place, I am about the oldest member of the Conference, not even excluding my friend, to my left (Hon. Mr. Mohendra-chandra Mitra) and my countrymen retain their traditional respect for age (cheers). In the second place as a Brahmin and the Conference needs the blessings of a Brahmin (cheers). It was a mandate of the Conference that I should speak on this motion.

I have always obeyed the mandate of my countrymen and at times these mandates have gone against my inclinations. The intention, the will of my countrymen is supreme. The voice of the people is the voice of God, and I bow to it.

Gentlemen, in proposing the Hon'ble Babu Akhilchandra Datta to the Presidential Chair, I take it that West Bengal is paying a tribute to East Bengal. I trust that my Hon'ble friend will accept it in that light (cheers). There are reasons why West Bengal should do homage to East Bengal. We remember the glorious days of the partition agitation when East Bengal put up the strongest fight against the partition. We remember the services East Bengal rendered in those days. The robustness of East Bengal was never more conspicuous than on that historic occasion and my friend possesses in a pre-eminent degree the qualities that distinguish his countrymen (cheers). Many of my friends of West Bengal may not be quite familiar with the activities of the Hon'ble Babu Akhilchandra Datta. He is a vigorous, energetic member of the Bengal Legislative Council persistent in defending the interests of persons detained under the Defence of India Act and Regulation III of 1918. He fought, heroically fought, on behalf of the Sindhubalas (cheers) and lastly only the day before yesterday he was able to extort from the Government

a concession which is a tribute to the growing power of public opinion in the country viz., the formation of a committee to enquire into the case of Jyotish-chandra Ghosh. Gentlemen, we are making a headway in these and other matters. Many years ago,—you may not remember but I am old enough to remember it—Lord Ripon said that the time was first approaching when in India public opinion would become an irresistible and unresisted power. We are within a measurable distance of that time. The atmosphere has changed and a change in the angle of vision is perceptible. In the Imperial Legislative Council we scored a victory. The Government agreed to appoint an advisory board in connection with the internments and deportations. I carried out the mandate of the country (cheers) and so long as I live that should be the supreme avocation of my life (cheers). An Advisory Board has been sanctioned. I hope it will be appointed as soon as possible, for every moment lost is a moment of suffering of persons interned. I hope there would be two High Court Judges, and one Indian lawyer would be also a member of the Board. Everything will depend on the personnel. I hope the personnel would be such as would inspire confidence of the people (hear, hear).

Sir, the presidentship of the Conference is a great honour—one of the highest in our power to confer on

any one. I have not the slightest doubt that my Hon'ble friend will do the amplest justice to the office to which he is summoned and that he will occupy that office in no way unworthy of those who had occupied it before with dignity and honour. Ladies and gentlemen, I invite you to accept him as President of the Conference (cheers).

In absence of Mr. B. Chakravarty who had till then not arrived Mr J. N. Roy in seconding the motion said :

Mr. Chairman, brother and sister delegates,

I have great pleasure in seconding the resolution which has been so eloquently moved by my friend the Hon. Mr. Surendranath Banerjee. I am proud of the fact that we have decided to invite the Hon. Babu Akhilohandra Datta to the Chair. I am proud because he is an East Bengal man and I am also an East Bengal man. I may say that I have not been able to educate myself out of the parochial feeling. Everything, every man and thing that come from East Bengal makes a peculiar appeal to me. Apart from personal reasons we all know the notable career of the Hon'ble Babu Akhilchandra Datta in the public life of Bengal. His services in connection with the internments have been invaluable and with your assistance he will be able to render more valuable

services in that connection. There is an old saying that there is something of divinity in every god. I believe there is something in every leader. I am in a happy frame of mind to pay homage to everyone whatever may be his political creed. In that happy frame of mind I ask you to permit my associating myself with all that has been said by the proposer of the motion. The times are changing. The Chairman of the Reception Committee has referred to the services that our young men are begging to render to the public cause, the public affairs of the country. They are adding new lightning to our eyes. It is only right that a man of the type of the Hon'ble Babu Akhilchandra Datta should be closely associated with them. With these words I have great pleasure to second the motion.

The Hon'ble Mr. Abul Kasem in supporting the motion said that as Mr. Roy was proud of the fact that Mr. Datta hailed from East Bengal he (Mr. Kasem) was proud of the fact that he was his colleague. The speaker deprecated the action of many members of the council who left the council when an important motion was under discussion. He also said that the Mussalmans were specially grateful to the Hon. Mr. Akhilchandra Datta who always supported moslem interests. In electing Mr. Datta as President

they honoured themselves and showed that they appreciated good solid work.

Rai Jadunath Mazumdar of Jessore speaking in Bengali said that West Bengal was becoming effeminate. In that important assembly he was sorry not to find any one from Uttarpara which was an important village in the district of Hughly.

Babu Jogendralal Chaudhury also supported the motion which was carried with acclamation.

The Hon'ble Babu Akhilchandra Datta occupied the Presidential chair amidst continued applause.

Mr. Datta delivered the following address which was punctuated in every few lines, with cheers :

The Presidential Address

Tribute to the Dead

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me at the very outset to offer our humble tributes of respect to the hallowed memory of Mr. A. Rasul an Ex-president of the Bengal Provincial Conference. The cruel hand of death has taken him away at a time when the country could ill-afford to lose his services. Whoever knew a more sincere patriot, a more devoted worker, a more spotless character, a more

trusted leader and a more fearless advocate to the country's cause ? It is seldom given to the leaders of a great movement to enter promised land. But the last days of Mr. Rasul must have been cheered by the reflection that his labours had not been altogether barren, for the rapprochement between the Hindus and the Mahomedans was an accomplished fact before he laid down his life. He was an Evangelist of the great Home Rule movement on this side of India and went to his grave with the Home Rule badge entwined round his breast. The public life of Bengal is certainly poorer to-day by his sudden, tragical and premature death.

Ladies and Gentlemen, four months hence and the fourth year of the great war will close. Whatever might have been the real origin of the War its aims have now been clearly formulated. It is now a struggle between Democracy and Autocracy.

The allies have staked their last dollar on the establishment of popular governments. Self-realisation and self-determination have been most unreservedly declared to be the goal of humanity. The events happening in every country in Europe and the speeches made by the statesmen about the aims of the War have naturally their echo in India. No human power can withstand it. India feels the stirrings of a spring awakening. She could not but feel the influence of the

world movements. It will be the wisdom of an Ostrich to suppose that possibly the vast masses of the Indian population are free from that influence because the torch of knowledge has not been lighted and the blessings of even primary education have been withheld from them.

Gentlemen, I believe in thought power. I believe that a wave of thought is daily coming on to India from all parts of the world and doing its silent work in a miraculous manner. No Indian, educated or uneducated, literate or illiterate, can escape that influence. There is silent communion between the East and the West—between all parts of the world. The mightiest autocracy cannot prevent it. The Indians naturally feel that the ideal of human liberty includes the liberty of both East and West, that there is no geographical demarcation for the weaker nations for whom the allies are fighting, that people should be emancipated from the tyranny of autocrats on both sides of the Black Sea and that the proposed League of Nations does not exclude India. The Indians believe that in giving effect to vital principles of government the British people cannot blow both hot and cold, enforcing in the East what they reprobate in the West. They heard the Bishops of Madras and Calcutta uttering a timely warning and pointing out that if it is wrong for Germany to impose her system

of bureaucratic rule of unwilling nations, equally wrong is it for England to enforce such a system upon India against the will of the Indian people.

This would have been the case even if India had been in the comfortable position of a more idle and amused spectator. Mr. Montagu is however of opinion that the share of the Indian people in this war from the very beginning has always been greater and more willing than the share of the Indian Government. At the very outset of the war the Indian army saved the situation in France. Since then India has, in the words of Lord Hardinge “bled absolutely white” for the Empire. Apart from our contribution of £100 millions, and apart from the huge individual contributions of the Indian princes and the people in aid of war charities, we have helped the Empire in various and indirect ways too numerous to mention here. Allow me, Brother Delegates, to quote an important passage from the Guild Hall speech of the Premier.

“The dominions and India have contributed a million men. That has trasformed our ideas regarding the reality and beneficence of the British Empire. The world cannot afford to let it be broken, but the choice must be between immediate concentration and ultimate dissolution. Things cannot remain where they were.

“That was all very well before they had made great sacrifices. They have now established claims

to real partnership. Henceforth effective consultation must be the only basis of co-operation. If our action brings them into trouble as it has done, and it costs them millions of precious lives, they must henceforth be consulted before we act. Methods must be carefully considered." Mr. Lloyed George made further acknowledgement of India's services in a message sent by him to the Viceroy in the following terms :—

"The splendid contribution to the common cause already made by the princes and people of India gives us sure confidence that their determination is no less high than ours and that however long the path to final victory, we shall tread it side by side. The latest acknowledgment is to be found in the following extract from the War Cabinet's Report for 1917 :—

"India's contribution in both manpower and material and money steadily increased throughout the year. India has taken a very important share in the victorious campaign in Mesopotamia. The great majority of troops in this theatre of war are Indian and they have fully sustained the high reputation of the Indian army for gallantry and endurance. India has been responsible for much of the supply, medical and transportation system by water and land. The Indian forces also rendered conspicuous services in France, Egypt and East Africa."

There may be ungratefulness in some quarters but

the statesman at the helm of affairs at this juncture knows and recognises that India has shed her blood in all the theatres of action—in Flanders and France, in Gallipoli and Mesopotamia, in Palestine and Egypt and that she has contributed her manhood no less lavishly than her money. She did so not because the Indians felt that they were real Citizens of the Empire in enjoyment of the rights of British citizenship. They were fully and keenly alive to their real status in India and in the Empire. They knew that they were *in* the Empire but not *of* it. As a matter of fact our rulers had the greatest misgivings about our attitude when the war first broke out. They thought that India was seething with discontent from before and apprehended that something disastrous might happen. But the instinctive and traditional loyalty of the Indian mind overcame and repulsed all the sinister attempts made to temper with it. India passed through a great ordeal and shed her blood for the Empire. What is the inner psychology of this attitude of the Indians towards the War? There was the predominant feeling of loyalty towards the throne; but will it be absolutely untrue to say that in plunging herself into the blood-bath India was possibly and unconsciously cheered by the hope that the victory of the allies would bring salvation to her, that it would lead to the emancipation of the millions of her enslaved people, that the

bureaucracy would be replaced by a responsible government, and that in the reconstruction of the Empire after the war India would be elevated from the status of a dependency to that of a co-partner. The unsophisticated straightforward people of India could not possibly believe that England would fight for one set of principles in Europe, and then apply another set of principles in India after winning victory with the help of India's man and India's money. Her hope and her claim were not considered extravagant, for shortly after the memorable Guildhall speech, there came the solemn announcement of the 20th August pledging responsible Government for India. To satisfy the people of India that it was not merely an expression of a pious hope the British Democracy sent down Mr. Montagu, that apostle of freedom and democracy, to India with the message of hope. He has come, he has discussed—discussed with the two contending parties viz., the people and the bureaucracy; he is in possession of all facts, he is now engaged formulating his scheme in collaboration with the Viceroy. All India is now waiting his decision with a palpitating heart. Never was one man placed by God in a position of greater trust and greater responsibility. We fervently pray to God that He may grant him strength and fortitude, that Mr. Montagu may not be overpowered by the reactionary

forces at work all around him, that he may be able to rise above the machinations of our enemies and do justice to this land of ancient culture and civilisation. On behalf of the entire country I wish him Godspeed in his great mission.

Why does India want responsible Government ?

Apart from the world forces, and apart from the trends and tendencies of the world-wide political evolution, there are other causes why India demands Responsible Government. The first and foremost of those causes is that the public mind of India has expanded more quickly than Macaulay expected and has long ago outgrown the present system of bureaucratic administration. "The proudest day in English history" which Macaulay foresaw in his prophetic vision, dawned long ago. But the bureaucracy has no fascination for the "little to glory" which he exhorted them to earn and has been moving heaven and earth to retard and avert that day of consummation. In the words of Lord Morley, thousands and thousands of our educated men have become intoxicated with the ideas of freedom, nationality and Self-Government. John Bright insisted that it was the duty of the Bureaucracy not only to govern India well but so to arrange its government and so to administer it that India might in due

course take up her own Government and administer it in her own fashion. How did the Indian bureaucracy perform that duty ? There can be only one answer to that question, and that answer is that they have failed egregiously. They have been uniformly hostile to our aspirations. Never was there a reform proposed which was not opposed by them. They absolutely ignored the growing spirit of Indian nationalism. It was their duty to encourage and foster that spirit, and to guide the political self-development of the people but they took every precaution to smother that spirit. They have been false to trust. The Government of India has now become "too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too antediluvian to be suitable for the requirements of the modern India. I am voicing the sentiments of the whole country when I say that self-development of India is impossible under the present bureaucratic system of administration. National Government is the only self-redemption of India. The bureaucracy have been tried and found wanting ; they must now surrender their power to their adolescent ward. Sir William Weddenburn observed so truly : "As a matter of British history and experience, bureaucratic rule has always proved a failure. Through bureaucratic ineptitude we lost the United States of America ; and it was only by the grant of Self-Government that our great colonies were preserved to us. Now, the merest

common-sense demands that we should extend to India's peace-loving, intelligent and loyal population a generous measurement of that Self-Government which under circumstances of difficulty and discord brought peace and brotherhood to Canada, Australia, South Africa."

The second reason why we want Responsible Government is that it is as much necessary for the sake of the Empire as it is for our own regeneration. The Titanic struggle is still convulsing the Empire and nobody knows how long this devastating war will go on. War requires men. You require men for war, both pending and impending. It is believed that a cloud, not bigger than a man's hand, has made its appearance on the offing. Who knows that the cloud will not assume huge proportions and darken the entire horizon of Asia? It is seriously believed in certain quarters that the political and geographical destiny of Japan is the danger-signal for the Empire and for India. Now can we shut our eyes to the present position of Russia and complications in Turkey? To meet all possible future contingencies manpower will be necessary. We have got an extensive frontier from the North-West to the North-East but practically no National militia. We have an extensive sea-board from Chittagong to Karachi but no national Navy. How will you protect the Indian continent without

man-power ? Where will you get the man-power except in India ? You cannot get the benefit of man-power of India unless you can put implicit trust in her people. They may not make spontaneous and cheerful response unless they feel that they are citizens of the Empire ; and unless they feel as much love for the Empire as an Englishman feels for it. There must be mutual love. How can that be achieved ? I say, gentlemen, that can be achieved in only one way viz., by the immediate grant of complete and full measure of responsible Government of India. If you want to save the Empire, if you want for that purpose to have the man-power of India, you must remove the Indian discontent and one may be absolutely certain that Indian discontent will not be removed until they receive full-fledged Responsible Government (hear, hear.)

Allow me, Brother Delegates, to place before you the following quotations from Water Balyes :—

“Such question as Home Rule for Ireland ceases to be a purely domestic concern. Our great alliances practically force us to explain our conduct to the world, and especially to America : and the answer which we thought good enough for Ireland will not be good enough for the United States and the world.

“Seeing that we are challenging the doings of Germany, Austria and Turkey in their own dominions

we shall not be able to shirk enquiry "into our own concerns. When we press questions as to Belgium, Serbia and Poland we cannot avoid being interrogated as to Ireland, Egypt and India."

Weak, crippled, helpless and discontented India will be a source of weakness and danger and a strong, contented, self-contained and self-protected India, a source of strength to the Empire. Brother delegates, India wants Self-government ; the Empire demands it.

The third reason why we want Self-government is that the situation in India is grave. That is the confirmed opinion and pronounced verdict by the man on the spot. According to Lord Chelmsford "the situation in India is becoming graver and graver every day." If you want to ease the tension of the Indian situation, if you want to remove the gravity of the situation, if you want to solve the Indian problem, you must make an immediate grant of Responsible Government. That is the only solution.

Gentlemen, we are all crying for peace. The whole world is anxious that this war should end once for all. It has been proposed to establish a League of Nations after the war to ensure permanent peace. Permanent peace of the world is now the universal desire and ambition of humanity. But, Gentlemen, the peace of the world will be out of the question as long as India remains weak and helpless. Therefore, I say that

Self-government is necessary not only for India, not only for the British Empire but for the whole world.

But, Brother Delegates, our strongest claim for Self-government is a very very simple one. We want Self-government because we have a birthright to it. It is our birthright to manage our own affairs. The Bureaucracy may laugh, the Anglo-Indian community may ridicule, but none-the-less it is true. When a whole nation is determined to be free, no human power can resist that determination. What we want, gentleman, is complete Provincial Autonomy in a Federated Indian Empire under the British Suzerainty. Mere tinkering will not do. Isolated concessious and isolated political boons will no longer satisfy the people. Mere memberships and Judgeships will not be of any avail. There is nothing in individuals, it is the system which counts. Our rulers should take note of one fact. An expansion of our councils without real power is bound to add to the volume of discontent. We want Responsible Government—responsible in its essence and responsible in its details. The Exceutive must be made responsible to the elected Legislaturé with complete control over finance. And we shall not trouble our mind as to wherefrom the Civil Service is recruited.

Lionel Curtis

It is however whispered in certain quarters that the scheme of reforms framed by Mr. Lionel Curtis is likely to find favour with the Government. I think I am not using the language of exaggeration when I say that this scheme if carried into effect, will be throwing a veritable apple of discord between the officials and non-officials and is fore-doomed to failure. It is a truism that finance is the pivot of all administrations and if some departments be given over to popular representatives without any control over finances and if in order to find "ways and means" they have to impose fresh taxes on an already over-taxed people, well may the people exclaim "Save us from such responsible Government". Dual system of administration with conflicting ideals has never succeeded and will never succeed. How long can a man jump on one leg ? Again, the bureaucracy is to be the judge of the success or failure of the people in regard to the departments that will be made over to them. Brother Delegates, nothing will be more disastrous than this. Is it fair that we should be judged by the very people whose continuance in power depends upon our failure ? (Hear, Hear). If it were given to any one to devise a scheme for the failure of popular Government in this country Mr. Curtis's watertight compartments would perhaps be the most suitable device.

Opposition to the New Policy

Ladies and Gentlemen, the announcement of the 20th August is certainly a most momentous one. But none-the-less it is so delightfully and so elastically vague that it may mean anything or nothing. There are so many qualifications and conditions and riders that the bureaucracy, if they have any voice in the matter, will render the reforms as unsubstantial as the fabled apples on the shores of the Dead Sea, rich and tempting to the view, but ashes to the taste. The history of British India is a history of broken pledges. The Queen's Proclamation was looked upon by the people as their Magna Charta, but the bureaucracy treated it as no better than a scrap of paper. Lord Ripon initiated his scheme of Local Self-government with true statesman-like vision. But what is good for the people is gall to the Bureaucracy. They did not allow Local Self-government to grow and expand. If his scheme were allowed to be properly developed, there would have been ideal electorates by this time formed, the absence of which is now put forward by our enemies as the chief ground of opposition to the introduction of Responsible Government. How these people are now taking advantage of their own wrong and own fraud ! They give you a bad name only to hang you. In fact it was a still-born institution. The Morley Reforms were originally conceived in the best of spirit and aimed at

the introduction of some representative element in our councils. He wanted to give to the people some voice in the management of their own affairs. But the regulations eventually framed by the Bureaucracy absolutely nullified them, and the result is that our Legislative Councils have become an absurd, illogical, and anomalous institution. The same reactionary forces are insidiously and assiduously at work to render the new policy of Mr. Montagu nugatory. The Viceroy has already propounded the doctrine of catastrophic changes and we can just have a peep into his mind from the following observations he made :—

“There are doubtless some of you who think our foot-steps halting and our progress slow. But I should be dishonest if I held out any hope that progress will be rapid.” His Excellency apparently overlooked the significance of the great world-events which have compelled the statesmen all over the world to discard the ‘formulas framed before the flood’ and to embrace the true time-spirit against which the Olympian gods must fight in vain. In a well-known speech Mr. Lloyd George said, “There are times in history when this world spins so leisurely along its destined course that it seems for centuries to be at a stand-still. There are also times when it rushes along at a giddy pace covering the track of centuries in a year. There are such times.” The Governor of Madras had already expressed his loyalty

to the country-old and bigoted bureaucracy by the internment of Mrs. Besant because she happened to be the most fearless advocate of Indian Nationalism. The only object of her internment was to crush the propagandist work which this gifted and powerful lady was carrying on in Madras. The Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab is also an uncompromising admirer of the irresponsible Government and refused admittance into the Punjab Messrs. Tilak and Pal—two most prominent Home Rulers in India (cheers). The most remarkable thing about these Gubernatorial mandates is that these are repressive measures adopted to strike and stifle constitutional agitation for Self-government. Our own Governor “uttered a word of caution lest you be encouraged to cherish hopes which are not destined to be fulfilled.” Speaking of Local Self-government his Lordship observed “I am deeply impressed with the importance of laying a solid foundation upon which may be built up in the years to come a genuinely representative system of that greater measure of Self-government which some of you hope to see achieved.” He also observed “I am firmly convinced that no Jerry-built edifice will stand and that what is required is a solid structure raised thought and care upon a firm and well laid foundation.” Why is our edifice still Jerry-built—why is our structure not solid and raised upon a firm and

well laid foundation after 160 years of British rule ? These are certainly very pertinent questions. But who will answer them ? Who are answerable for this state of things ? Who is the Jerry-builder whom Lord Ronaldshay had in view ? Is he the ruler or the ruled ? Why no structure was raised upon the foundation laid by Lord Ripon ? In any case Lord Ronaldshay speaks enthusiastically about Local Self-Government but has nothing but cold water to throw on Responsible Government and takes pains to give you his clearest assurance that you are doomed to dissapointment if you expect any substantial advance towards Responsible Government in his time.

European Association

Brother Delegates, the Anglo-Indian community has declared war against you. Whoever heard of the activities of the European Association ? It is all but admitted by its late President that it was at best in a moribund and comatose condition. To it politics was an occasional diversion and never a serious occupation. But all of a sudden in the third week of August last "a small and restless and voiceful class of innovators" has made its meteoric appearance in the Dalhousie Institute—a body of veritable political Rip Van Winkles and is now on the war-path. The European Association has now turned over a new leaf in its

monotonous and listless career and is girding up its loins to embark upon a political agitation and to deluge the country both here and in England with a persistent flow of its newly acquired oratory. They have assumed the new role of political agitators. These people are full of patriotism ; and if they oppose Home Rule for India they do so not so much in their own interest as in the interest of the masses of this country ! But I ask in all seriousness what is their “locus standi” ? Have they received any brief from the masses ? They say they are the trustees of the caste-enslaved millions. Trustees ? Who made them trustees ? When was the trust deed executed ? Is the trust deed genuine ? Or is it a forgery out and out ? The C. I. D. is also a trustee—a most trusted trustee of all people who have been unjustly interned and deported. The officer in charge of the Dallanda House is also a trustee of all the people who pass their incubation period in that mysterious house. Every Jailor is the accredited trustee of all the prisoners under him. Gentlemen, the Anglo-Indians no more represent the masses of this country than the man in the Moon might be said to represent them. Has it ever been an Article of Faith with them to champion the cause of the people ? Do the people of this country according to the articles of the European Association come within the scope of their activities ? Are they eligible to its membership ?

Have they ever taken any steps for the education of the children of the soil? Did they support Mr. Gokhale's Primary Education Bill? Did they ever agitate for the reduction of the salt tax which presses so heavily upon the poor people? Have they ever tried to understand their feelings and wishes? Have they ever invited them to the Dalhousie Institute except on one occasion after the announcement of the 20th August last, when they got together a dozen of Namasudras and boasted of a monster meeting? Have they spent a single cowri out of the fund of their Association for the betterment of their lot? So far, gentlemen, as we know, the only gift for which the masses have to be thankful to them is the gift of kicks by the wayside and the only relief given to them was the gratuitous rupture of their enlarged spleen. They have, of course, been more kind to the coolies ever since the introduction of electric fans. Ladies and Gentlemen, the crocodile tears which the Anglo-Indians are shedding for the masses cannot but excite Sardonic laughter. This clamant and microscopic minority of exclusive white Brahmins masquerading as the High Priests of the depressed classes of this country professing to try to emancipate them from the rule of the coloured Brahmins is a sight for the gods to see and enjoy. Naked opposition to the just claims and aspirations of the Indian people would be

indecent and therefore these ingenious politicians with all the resourcefulness of a juggler are speaking in the name of the people for whom they have no more love than the exacting proprietor of a factory or mill has for the ill-paid and overworked coolies under him. Oppose Home Rule by all means if your instincts as Englishmen dictate and permit you to do so, and if you can do so without violence to your conscience, but why put forward a ground which you know is absolutely dishonest? The Chairman of the Madras Branch seems partially to realise this and candidly admits that in the past they were not as a community particularly active on behalf of the interest of the people. Ladies and gentlemen, look at the attitude of those Anglo-Indian extremists. They have characterised the announcement of the 20th August as *fateful and revolutionary*. They question the very principle underlying this new policy. They set their face against the very ideal embodied in the announcement. They honestly believe—so they say, this great Dependency must be governed by the British Parliament and British people for many long years. Gentlemen, these people have been so much demoralised, they have lost their national virtues to such an extent, the very idea of responsible Government is so galling to them that they do not feel any compunction or delicacy in denouncing the solemn Parliamentary declaration.

The chief Anglo-Indian argument is that a small oligarchy cannot represent the dumb millions of India. Let an English-edited and English-owned paper answer this baseless contention. The Indian Daily News some time ago made the following comments on the speech of Mr. Jones, Editor of the Statesman, delivered at the Dalhousie Institute meeting of the European Association :—

“Another argument put up by the logician (that is how Mr. Jones is characterised by the Indian Daily News) that a small minority of semi-educated people cannot represent the mass of ignorant Indian humanity, has often been answered. Read English History. How long have the masses been represented ? People will tell you that they are not represented yet and that is to a large extent true. Certainly they are not represented like the population of France or America where there is manhood suffrage. But one has only to read Pickwick and the description of the Eatensmill election to see that the world went somehow on in 1830 with the smallest possible representation of the people through a few ignorant and disreputable voters. That was the case for a century before the Reform Act, and some people think that the property and residential qualifications on voting which still prevail in England, totally prevent the representation of the masses. At all events the

fact remains that England was for a century before Waterloo represented by a small set of voters, who were mainly rascals. Yet England had a fairly respectable political history in that century. The real fact is that in England the dumb millions have never been satisfactorily represented and we are only just coming to it. * * * But to say that a country is not fit for self-government because its voters are few and of no character and do not represent the people, is to fly in the face of the facts of English political history." This position is also supported by the following quotation from Reynolds—"The working classes form the great bulk of the nation. In the House of Commons it is very evident that the vast majority of the members has neither the knowledge nor the qualifications to represent the workers. And yet politicians talk glibly of the House of Commons being a microcosm of the nation." The press and the platform, the resolutions of the Congress and the League, the proceedings of the Imperial and the Provincial Councils will satisfy any unbiased student that the higher and middle classes are the only and true representatives of the dumb millions of India. I shall not discuss the question of our fitness for Self-Government on the merits. I shall, however, say this to the bureaucracy and to the Anglo-Indian Community as you admit about 160 years of British

rule could not make us fit for Self-Government, this very unfitness on our part proves unfitness on your part to govern us any longer. In other words, our unfitness, if true, is itself a ground for transference of power from your hands. We ask for representative government and immediately the question is flung upon our face "But where is the Electorate?" We ask for popular Government and immediately we are confronted with the question "But are not your people illiterate?" Now, brother delegates, it is all very well to talk like this. But who are to answer these questions? The people of India who had absolutely no voice in the administration of the country or the rulers whose duty certainly it was to remove the illiteracy and to develop proper Electorates? The people who clamoured for Elementary education or the rulers who persistently delighted in withholding the blessings of education from the masses, stoutly opposing all schemes of popular education? The people whose villages were upon the English authority little self-governing republics which have been the admiration alike of the historian and economist, or the Rulers who have always striven to officialise and emasculate the system? The people whose representatives—not the members of the European Association but belonging to the educated middle classes—only about a year ago moved in the Bengal Legislative

for their default in the past and promise now to know something about these matters. Of course there is nothing *malafide* in this belated study. Why should you think that the real object of this proposed study is to make a supreme effort to accentuate the difference between caste and caste and set class against class to make out a case against Home Rule ! They are also making a life-and-death struggle to capture what they choose to call the "moderate party of the permanent population." Gentlemen, I ask you in all seriousness to be moderate and not violent. But at the same time I must warn you against the sinister design of this movement. The Anglo-Indian is abroad in the fascinating garb of an Evangelist of united action and compromise between the Indians and the Anglo-Indians. Beware of the Anglo-Indians. Already there are indications that they have made one or two converts from amongst us. Beware of these converts too.

Indo-British Association

Brother delegates, I have not yet come to the end of the long list of our opponents. We have also to fight against Sydenham and Co, of the Indo-British Association—an Association of mushroom growth—springing up also after the declaration of the new policy in August last. They consist mostly of retired

Civil Servants fattening upon money paid by the people of India. They have kicked up a row in England and doing their level best to oppose the grant of Self-Government to India. They have become political agitators of a violent character. While in service in India they carried the Anglo-Indian banner throughout their career, opposing any and every scheme of reform large or small. These birds of passage have now retired from active service; but they cannot allow the solid work of a life-time to be nullified by that impatient idealist Mr. Montagu and others of his school and are now carrying on propagandist work against the movement for Self-Government. Well, Gentlemen, you are nursing them with milk and they must bite you. They are of course another edition—a more leisurely and a more resourceful edition of the existing Bureaucracy—their unpaid agents in England, doing gratuitous disservice to India which while in service they used to call their land of adoption and which they left for good the very day their service terminated! There is something unholy in the very origin of this association (hear hear)—its object avowedly and professedly being to oppose the just aspirations of one-sixth of the entire human race (shame).

Appeal to Leaders

Brother Delegates, you thus find that the declaration of the new policy does not indicate the final stage of your struggle. This is but the beginning of the end. The decision rests with the British democracy. It is necessary to carry on an organised agitation both here and in England. We have to fight the misrepresentation and calumny of our enemies. The prapagandist work before us is stupendous. We cannot allow the grass to grow under our feet. Our most sacred duty now is to send an influential deputation from Bengal as Madras and Bombay have already done. Brother Delegates, you must remember Now or Never. Let us concentrate all our energies, let us make a supreme effort to send as many of our leaders and workers to England as possible. To our leaders I shall say this on behalf of this Conference and on behalf of the entire country :—No personal ground of any description excepting ill health should stand in your way. Everything else can wait but not this. The psychological moment will never come again. There is a tide in the affairs of nations which taken at the flow will lead on to fortune. Six months dedicated to the service of the mother country at this crisis will out-weigh the service of a life-time. In the name of this Conference, therefore, I appeal with all the

earnestness I can command, to Babu Surendranath Banerjee, Mr. B. Chakraborty, Mr C. R. Das, Mr. J. N. Roy, Babu Jitendralal Banerjee, Mr A. K. Fazlul Haq and other leaders of Bengal to start at once for England. Bengal has full confidence in them and expects them to do their duty—the mother-country calls upon them to obey this call of duty. They have no right of option. Great is the honour of their position, greater still is their responsibility. Allow me, Brother delegates, to say a few plain words in this connection. Leadership is a self-imposed position, but having once accepted the position of a leader, you have pledged yourself to the country and her interest is the first charge upon your life and labour. You must consecrate your time, energy and your life to her service. Let it not be said of anybody in Bengal that he deserted his post at the psychological moment when the fate of the country was trembling in the balance.

Reforms and Repression

Brother Delegates, while Mr Mantagu and the British democracy are seriously discussing Home Rule for India, we have side by side repression of the most virulent type, desolating almost every hearth and home of this great province. The question, however, arises whether reform and repression can go

hand in hand. The system of right-handed repression and left-handed concession was tried during the Minto Morley regime and you all know how signally that absurd policy failed. History has however an irresistible tendency to repeat itself, and we now find ourselves between the scheme of self-government on one side and internment and deportation on the other. Brother Delegates, do I not echo the voice of the entire country when I say that the object of the new policy will be frustrated if there is not an immediate reversal of the present internment policy of the Government? Do you not agree with me, gentlemen, that the Bureaucracy is aggravating the situation which the New Policy seeks to ease and save?

Verdict of People

There has been a chorus of condemnation from the Press and the Platform against the internment Policy of the Government. All the political associations and public bodies entered their firm protest from the very outset. This subject formed an important plank in the platform of the last session of the *Indian National Congress and the All India Moslem League*. I have not forgotten the soul-stirring appeal which the gifted President of the Congress made on behalf of the detents and deportees. Last, though not least was the

Calcutta Town Hall Meeting held the other day. Who can overlook the overwhelming significance of the national gathering in that historic hall ? Was it a got-up show ? Was it an engineered demonstration ? Men like Sir Rashbehari Ghosh and Sir B. C. Mitter took part in the meeting. Is Sir Rashbehari Ghosh a professional agitator ? Is there any man in India more sober, more responsible, more trusted by the Government than Dr. Ghosh ? Is there one man in India, Indian or European, whose judgment is entitled to greater weight than that of this intellectual giant who if born in the United States of America would have been the President, or if born in England the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom ? (hear, hear). Is Sir B. C. Mitter a fire-brand ? (*Cries—By no means*) Yet these are the people who have pronounced their considered verdict against the policy of Internment. About half a dozen of people's representatives in the *Bengal Legislative Council* have been hammering on this subject, meeting after meeting, asking questions which are never answered properly, and moving resolutions which are never given effect to. Even the 'Ladies' of Calcutta came out of their seclusion, held a public meeting and demanded immediate release of the persons interned and deported without trial. It is impossible that there can come from the people of this country any other response than one

loud and universal hiss of indignation. You may agree or disagree with the opinion—but the opinion is there. It is sheer madness to ignore or belittle that opinion (hear, hear). The position is therefore incontrovertible - that the people of all classes and communities in this country and politicians of all shades of opinion have denounced the action of the Government. But they need not care, because they are not responsible to the people. Gentlemen, you can well imagine what would have been their fate if the Government had been a popular one.

Brother Delegates, there are two facts about which there can be no manner of controversy, viz. :

(1) The Indians are the victims of the revolutionary crimes ; the Europeans are not.

(2) The Indians demand the release of internees and deportees ; the Europeans do not.

Now, Brother Delegates, the very pertinent question arises—how to explain this curious phenomenon ? Why should the people have any pity for those who are supposed to be enemies of the society ? It appears to me that the explanation is simple and obvious. It is this : The people believe and honestly believe that there are many amongst the interned and deported who are innocent. They honestly believe that their belief is well-founded and it is therefore that they demand their release. This is the only theory which

can rationally explain the otherwise anomalous and mysterious attitude of the people towards the interned. I wonder the Government has ever considered this aspect of the question. It has been said, Gentlemen, that a whole nation can never go wrong. It is admitted on all hands that the criminal conspiracy is confined to a handful of men. Lord Chelmsford has declared in most unequivocal terms that the heart of the great mass of the people is sound. Even "our friend" "The Statesman" has had to admit only three weeks ago—"For our part we believe that the anarchist conspiracy has been an excrescence on the political life of Bengal, that those engaged in it were *comparatively few*, that the vast majority of politicians even of the extremist type have been in ignorance of the sinister organisation and sincerely deplore the shocking crimes perpetrated by the party of violence." This opinion would not be worth quoting but for the outrageous theory seriously put forward by the Pioneer that "between the popular representatives in the Imperial Legislative Council who criticised the Government measures and the bomb-throwers there is a nexus". Our distinguished countryman—Sir Rabindranath Tagore expressed his decided opinion that a large number of those punished are innocent. His Excellency Lord Ronaldshay thought it was a grave charge for any responsible person to make

against any Government. I for one cannot imagine a greater impeachment of any Government whether responsible or irresponsible. The charge is no doubt extremely humiliating to the Government. The question however is whether there is any foundation for the charge. If the charge is true, then certainly the Government has inflicted a grievous wrong upon the people—a wrong for which there can be no manner of compensation, a wrong for which the Government will remain answerable to God and men for all time to come. (Hear, hear). Now, Gentlemen, I want to tell you this. The charge can be proved to the hilt by facts about which there is no controversy and about which there cannot be any controversy. The case for the Government has been stated and restated by Lord Carmichael and Lord Ronaldshay with all the enthusiasm of an advocate. But, Gentlemen, I have not yet heard it said that all the interned people are guilty of participation in any conspiracy of crime, or of abetment of the same. Even the case for the Government does not go so far as that. Mark you, Gentlemen, what I say, and I need hardly tell you that I mean what I say. I say this that even according to the case for the Government many men have been interned and deported who have never had anything to do with any revolutionary crime either directly or indirectly. About a year ago, Gentlemen, Lord

Carmichael told us that "in about 5 per cent. of the whole cases of internments there is nothing very definite to justify detention." His Lordship also told us on the 14th of March 1917, in the Bengal Legislative Council that even those immature youths have even interned, "who are mere tools, who have no idea as to what evil purposes they themselves are being put to." Gentlemen, was there any shadow of justification for interning those tender youths? Is Sir Rabindranath Tagore wrong when he says that they are innocent both morally and legally? But do you know, Gentlemen, that Lord Carmichael went further? Do you remember that His Lordship almost confessed judgment when he admitted that "amongst the interned there are many who may almost be said to be innocent"? Brother Delegates, after all the fire and thunder there comes the admission that many men almost innocent, have been deprived of their personal liberty under this lawless law. (shame, shame)

Gentlemen, the accusation by Sir Rabindranath Tagore is therefore supported by the statements of of Lord Carmichael himself. Gentlemen, I maintain that in bringing the charge Sir Rabindranath merely echoed the feelings of the people. Have I your permission, Brother Delegates, to declare from the Presidential chair of the Bengal Provincial Conference

that many innocent men and boys have been interned and deported without just cause ? (*A voice—certainly.*) May I take it that the Bengal Provincial Conference gives its seal to the authoritative declaration made by Sir Rabindranath Tagore on more than one occasion ? (O yes, hear, hear.)

Professional Informers

It is admitted that many internment orders have been passed on the testimony of professional informers even when it is not corroborated by any other evidence, circumstantial or otherwise. (*A voice—disgraceful.*) Gentlemen, nothing more can be more disastrous than this. We know that a large amount of money is being expended from year to year in maintaining the glorious band of informers. If the King's coins and the rate-payers' good money are so freely circulated among the police underlings and police spies and if their evidence is not to be tested in a public trial, is it any wonder that there should not be any discrimination between proof and suspicion, between evolutionary and revolutionary parties and that many innocent persons should suffer for affording justification for the existence and maintenance of the secret service ? It is too late in the day, Gentlemen, to ask us to accept the evidence of informers. From Titus Oates to Narendranath Goswami, they have never

inspired any confidence and will never do so. They can create a reign of Suspicion and a reign of Terror but the people will never feel induced to accept a verdict based upon their uncorroborated whispers. The existence of the Secret Police is an admitted fact. The history of Russia proves the evil of such an agency. We know that in Russia there is a such thing as Agent Provocateur. It was the business of these agents to instigate political crimes and thus to draw unsuspecting impressionable youths into the meshes of political conspiracies. It has been said by a high authority that these agents have their fore legs in revolutionary conspiracies and their hind legs in the secret police office. I am not suggesting that these evils have manifested themselves here but they are the attending evils of the Secret Police. Is there any reason to suppose that with the advent of the Secret Police our Society will not be similarly poisoned by such unscrupulous agents ?

We shall next consider the matter from another view-point. The outrages are committed either by political revolutionaries or by ordinary criminals. Lord Carmichael observed in December, 1916, that whatever might have been originally their motive, most of them have long since become common criminals. His Lordship added, "Whatever may be the ideals which actuate those who suggest the crimes,

those who commit them follow, for the most part, the same impulses which lead common criminals to commit brutal murders and robberies.”

If they are ordinary criminals, they may be dealt with under the ordinary criminal law of the land. If on the other hand they are political revolutionaries, the question arises whether repression is the sovereign remedy. Do you remember, gentlemen, what Lord Carmichael said on this point? His Lordship said “I believe that we can’t stamp out the evil by executive methods alone. We must have popular opinion with us.” One cannot too much emphasise the true inwardness of this position. But it is a pity of all pities that no serious attempt has been made by the Government to carry the popular opinion with them. On the contrary a systematic effort has throughout been made to defy the public opinion and to run a campaign in opposition to the growing strength of public opinion in all possible ways. They have no doubt appealed to the people again and again for co-operation; it is idle to disguise the fact that appeal has hitherto signally failed to produce any impression upon the people. Has the Government cared to understand why this appeal for co-operation fell flat upon the ears of people who even according to ‘the Statesman’ “sincerely deplore the political crimes”? The answer is simple and obvious. They

ask for co-operation but won't take us into their confidence. Co-operation and confidence must go hand-in-hand. Co-operation and distrust can never exist together. To ask the people to co-operate without taking them into confidence is to ask them blindly to accept the story of the police. We have been urging on the Government to take effectual steps to discriminate between the guilty and not guilty, to discriminate between constitutional agitation and revolutionary propaganda, to discriminate between suspicion and proof, to discriminate between those who are believed to have rushed headlong into the movement and those who are just on the fringe. We have urged that charges should be framed in writing, that copies of charges should be given to suspects together with the facts upon which that charge is based, that they should be asked to make their statements in writing, that they should be given opportunity to meet the charges laid at their door and adduce evidence in support of their statements. But, I ask you, Brother Delegates, is it not a fact that in the vast majority of instances our people have been condemned unheard? 'Strike but hear' is a prayer which our rulers think is more than they can reasonably grant. The inevitable result is the massacre of innocent men, innocent boys, and even of innocent women. It can no longer be said that

we are abnormally suspicious. That was the charge that used to be brought against us formerly. It is now admitted that two Purdanashin ladies were arrested and detained for a fortnight without any justification whatsoever. (shame). Gentlemen, what are things coming to? Are we to maintain the C. I. D. at the cost of the public to serve the public in this outrageous fashion? Is this the sort of service for which we are maintaining our public servants? Does the Government ask us in all seriousness to put up with such vagaries of the servants of the public with icy coldness? Ladies and Gentlemen, with your permission I shall here tell my countrymen what I told His Excellency the Governor on this subject from my place in the Bengal Legislative Council. I said :—

“The raid on the Sindhubalas may be a feather in the cap of the C. I. D., but it may be the last straw on a camel’s back. (hear, hear). There is, after all, my lord, a limit even to Oriental patience. (hear, hear). People have tolerated indiscriminate arrest of men and boys. They will never do so in the case of their mothers and sisters.” (hear, hear).

As Mr. Lalmohan Ghosh said on a certain occasion, “There are moments in the history of nations when the virtues of patience and forbearance may be carried too far. This is one of those moments.” Do

you hear, gentlemen, the piteous but impassioned appeal which the injured innocence of the Sindhubalas is sending forth to this Provincial Conference from their outraged and humiliated village homes in the interior of Bankura ? Do you hear how they call upon you to obtain redress of their grievances ? Do you hear how they call upon you to peremptorily ask the Government to dismiss outright all those public servants who are the authors of these unparalleled insults (hear, hear) ; how they call upon you to insist upon the Government to take steps for preventing such arrest and such detention in future not only in the case of women but also in the case of men and boys, because we have received an assurance that such cases will never happen in the case of women as if the liberty of men and boys is of no consequence ; how they call upon you to move heaven and earth, to leave no constitutional stone unturned to bring the C. I. D. under proper control ; how they call upon you to carry on the constitutional agitation both here and in England until you can compel the Government to abandon the policy of internment and deportation ? Gentlemen, I, for my part, appeal to you in the name of the outraged humanity of Bengal to carry on your constitutional fight, undeterred by the frowns, and unseduced by the smiles of power, and I am sure, as I am sure of my own existence here at the present

moment, that this lawless law will soon be a thing of the past (hear, hear). You must carry on the constitutional agitation, if necessary, in England ; if necessary, you must take to passive resistance until you have the 'Oppression of India Act' repealed.

If, as Lord Carmichael so truly observed, executive methods are not sufficient to stamp out the evil, and if public opinion must be brought into service, the question is how can this be achieved. That is the question of all questions for British statesmanship to solve. This leads us, Brother Delegates, to the question of the—

Genesis of the Revolutionary Movement

Revolutionary movement is not, and cannot be a plant of mushroom growth but a tree of the forest with scores of years behind it. 'The Indian soil is not suitable for the growth of this foreign plant. The soil must have revolted and resisted and it must have taken long before it could take its root in such uncongenial soil. The birth and growth of a revolutionary cannot be as instantaneous as that of a bird or tree by the magical touch of the conjurer's wand. It must have been a slow process. What then is that slow process ?

Political Unrest—its Economic Causes

It is only a truism to say that the origin of Political unrest is two-fold—political and economical.

Has not the British rule destroyed India's finest arts and industries in order to favour the importation of cheap foreign goods? Has it not taxed the home produce in order to balance customs duty on imported goods? Did it not encourage the export of raw materials to come back as manufactured articles thus paralysing Indian industrial efforts for the benefit of foreigners? Did it not encourage and facilitate exploitation of the country by English Companies and English capital? In fact the last 160 years witnessed the extinction of all our industries, and the British rule has effected the impoverishment of the people and the country to an extent almost unparalleled in history.

We have at last arrived at a stage when the bread problem must be solved, or a process of disintegration will begin. The solution of the problem of the provision of the unemployed can no longer be put off with impunity. Whatever may be the orthodox official opinion, there is no doubt that many of the so-called political dacoities have hardly any political complexion and even sons of Bhadrals have been driven to this dastardly crime as a means of livelihood. Lord Chelmsford said some time ago "I share with you the belief that political unrest can often be traced to the economic conditions."

People may become accustomed to all sorts of

oppression but never to hunger. They become desperate. The danger to British rule lies far more in the misery of the masses than in the discontentment of the educated. The recent hat-looting has shewn to what desperation the masses may be driven even by a rise in the price of salt. It is a matter of sincere congratulation that the evil has been nipped in the bud. But it should be an eye-opener both to the Government and the people.

Political Unrest—Its Root Political Causes

The next question is what are the political forces which were at work for years and years which have eventually resulted in the growth of a revolutionary party? Brother Delegates, this leads me to a survey of the general political situation and the status which we Indians hold and have held in our own country. This is a comprehensive subject and I cannot possibly do justice to it within the limited compass of a Presidential address. I propose therefore to refer to the most salient features.

Apart from the ideals and pious wishes held out in the Proclamations and apart from instances of individual generosity, can any one honestly deny that the one principle which has been uniformly and religiously followed in the governance of India is India for England and not India for Indians?

I ask you, Brother Delegates, are we anything better than hewers of wood and drawers of water ? Do you feel, can you feel at home in your own home ? Are we not so many intruders in our own country ? The bitter resentment of the Indian mind was best expressed more than a quarter of a century ago in that well-known line 'Nija Basabhume parabasi hole'. Who monopolise the loaves and fishes of the state ? The foreigners or the children of the soil ? Is there the least exaggeration in the statement that in all departments of life the greatest sin and disqualification in India is to be an Indian ? Is there the shadow of justification for that intellectual giant Dr. P. C. Roy finishing his career as a member of the Provincial service (shame) while Europeans who are no better than pigmies by his side, begin their service as members of the Imperial grade ? (shame). European Civilians of indifferent merit become Divisional Commissioners and Provincial Governors, but such capable and meritorious Indians as Mr. R. C. Dutt and K. G. Gupta were practically shunted off the line. Is there not any Indian who is fit to be placed at the head of a Provincial Government ? Is Sir B. C. Mitter not qualified to be Advocate-General of Bengal ? (hear, hear). Why should the higher appointments in the Police and other departments be a close preserve for the spoilt and half-educated children of foreigners

when educated and qualified Indians are available ? Why are the doors of many departments shut against the Indians for no other reason than that they are Indians ? Is it not literally true that in the public services the upper branch is synonymous with European and the lower with Indian ? Does the average Englishman flatter himself with the idea that he is in any way superior to an average Indian ? Why most irritating distinction between Indians and foreigners in the matter of arms ? Can any self-respecting Indian contemplate over this distinction with equanimity ? Why should higher pay be given to the European incumbent for the same office ? Even people of the non-descript classes are given higher emoluments for performing the same duty. The Englishmen look down upon our caste system with unmitigated abhorrence, but can they deny that they have instituted a new caste system here, which is of a far more virulent character ? (hear, hear). Where is the Brahmin who has such unadulterated hatred for the so-called depressed classes as the Europeans entertain towards the Indians ? Brother Delegates, is it not a stern reality that we Indians are looked upon and treated as untouchables by the ruling caste ? A Brahmin has certainly to be invited on the occasion of a Sradh, but he does not think it beneath his dignity to call upon a neighbour of a lower caste, even apart

from such invitation. But have you ever come across a member of the ruling caste who does not think it beneath his dignity to return the visit even of a most respectable Indian or to grace the house of an Indian except in response to an invitation, not on the occasion of a *Sradh* but on the occasion of a party given in honour of some European? I believe 'parties' are now celebrated with more religious fervour than *Sraddhas* of parents! (laughter). Are you aware, gentlemen, that even Indian District Magistrates and Indian District Judges are denied the honour of a return visit if they do not belong to the 'Heaven-born Service'? Who ever returned from the house of a member of the ruling caste without a feeling of humiliation? The most faithful description of the popular feeling on the subject is 'Insolence! Thy name is Indian Bureaucracy.' Has the Government any idea as to how disastrous the effect of his insolence upon the Indian mind is—disastrous, I mean, for the Government? Even law is a respecter of persons in India. In the British courts in this country even-handed justice was out of the question as between an Indian and a foreigner. I should think things are not much better now. Not to speak of miscarriage of justice owing to the perversity of individual Judges and Magistrates, the legislature itself has made most irritating distinction between

Europeans and Indians. The Ilbert Bill agitation is no doubt ancient history now, but I for one refuse to believe that it has not left behind it a permanent sting and influence over the relationship between the rulers and the ruled.

Brother Delegates, these are some of the remote but root causes which slowly but steadily sowed the seeds of a feeling of discontent which eventually developed itself into political unrest. It however, required some immediate and exciting causes of an extraordinary character to burst forth. This leads me to the question—what are those

*Exciting Causes of Revolutionary Feeling
in Bengal*

The partition of Bengal, the Bande Mataram Circular, the Risley Circular, the Carlyle Circular and the crop of repressive circulars which preceded and followed them, the Regulation Lathis which were not only brandished in the streets of East Bengal but were actually showered upon the devoted heads of the promoters of the Swadeshi movement, the deportation of our most earnest and honest workers, the unjust persecution and prosecution of many true sons of Bengal, the preposterous sentences which used to be passed in what are known as the Swadeshi cases which staggered humanity—Lord Morley not

excepted—the letting loose of the Gurkha soldiers upon the helpless people of Backerganj and other districts of East Bengal, the game of Divide and Rule, the doctrine of ‘favourite wife’ not only preached with refreshing but cynical frankness but translated into action not certainly for the sake of the favoured but with a sinister design, the indiscriminate and wanton house-searches and arrests and the shadowing by the police, the breaking up of all social service leagues and beneficent *Samitis*—all these certainly put a most severe strain upon the loyalty of our people. They staggered, they paused, they rubbed their eyes, they wondered if they were in the twentieth century under enlightened British rule,—they groaned. They became silent, they became sullen too. But Brother Delegates, there is still something more to account for the appearance of the revolutionary party.

Legislative Subservient to the Executive

All the executive zuburdastism was not considered sufficient to crush the rising new spirit, a spirit which any national government would have guided, encouraged, fostered and directed in a right channel but the angry bureaucracy summoned the subservient legislature to forge the most reactionary and repressive measures one after another. In all civilized countries, Brother Delegates, the Executive are subject to

wholesome control of the Legislature but here in this country the Legislature dances to the tune of the Executive. In other countries the legislature exercises a check upon executive vagaries. But everything is topsyturvy here. Whenever the executive here wants to start a fresh campaign of repression, the bureaucracy forges an engine of oppression in the dark recess of the Secretariat, sends the bill cut and dried to the legislature whose function it then becomes merely to register the decree of the bureaucracy loyally, sometimes taking away the primary and elementary rights of the people in one and the same meeting of the council and sometimes going through the farce of useless formalities. As the role of the Prosecutor and the Judge is played by one and the same person so the executive and the legislative functions are conveniently blended in one and the same body of men. Some member of the bureaucracy discovers one fine morning that his powers under the existing law are not sufficient to meet the new situation ; he formulates his demands, draws up a bill in some capacity, introduces it in the legislative council somehow or other, votes for it and gets it passed. This is the sort of things which passes in this country under the name of legislation. The legislator is only a glorified edition of a bureaucrat. How unreal ! how sham !! what a mockery is this all !!! But to come

back to my point. I was speaking of the legislative bolts which were hurled at us with all the rapidity of shots from a machine gun.

A Crop of Repressive Laws

First came the Seditious Meetings Act passed in 1907. That shrewd statesman Dr Rashbehari Ghosh opposed the Bill not because he had ever any bias for sedition or seditious meeting, but with the unerring vision of a true prophet he saw that the measure was calculated to drive sedition underground. But the prophet was not honoured. He protested in vain and the law was passed. May I ask ten years after this unwise legislation whether the Government had not attempted to purchase "public tranquillity" at a very dear price? Will the Government now take stock and say frankly whether sedition was not driven underground? In 1908 the bureaucracy had the Newspapers Incitement to Offences Act passed. In 1909 they wanted to do away with all our associations which were rendering valuable service to the country. They said, let there be an Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act, and the law was passed. The next link in that interminable chain of cruel legislation is the Indian Press Act which was passed in 1910. It may serve as a temporary wet cloth on all expression of public opinion but its inevitable fruits are bound to

be bitter. The legislative machinery was obviously overworked and we had a respite for 2 years. But they resumed their activities with redoubled vigour, and in 1913 we had the Indian Criminal Amendment Act passed for the punishment of criminal conspiracies. The last, though not the least, was the Defence of India Act passed in 1915. So many repressive legislations crowded in such a short period must be unparalleled in the history of the civilised world. I wonder, Brother Delegates, if British Statesmanship thought it could sow whirl-wind and could reap a good harvest. I wonder if they failed to realise that the discontent, already deep, would be driven deeper and would, according to the immutable laws of human nature, find out its own outlet in some other channel. It is always dangerous to sit upon the safety-valve.

*Discontent leading to Constitutional
Agitation*

Discontent inevitably leads to struggle for liberty. Struggle we must until we reach the goal. The path may be long and devious, but we are not going to break our journey till we get to the promised land. You cannot arrest the march of time any more than you can make to-day like yesterday. You may chain the Prometheus but the fire is lighted and cannot be extinguished. You may as well stand on

the bank of the Hooghly and ask it to roll back to the Himalayas. The lesson of history is that repressive legislation not only frustrates its own object but recoils upon its author with vengeance. Need I point out that the oppressive laws of the last decade accelerated the growth of a revolutionary party? They certainly are the immediate and exciting causes of the movement. As usual in all countries the discontent in India led in the first instance to constitutional agitation.

Failure of Constitutional Agitation

In December 1884 seventeen true and leading men of India including Babu Surendranath Banerjee met in Madras and laid the foundation of the Indian National Congress which has during the last 32 years been fighting our constitutional battle. It is idle to disguise the fact that the National Congress failed to evoke a sympathetic response from the Government. The aged, the sober, the wise, and the cool-headed people however did not desert their post. They have carried their constitutional struggle up to now. But the world began to move very fast, the experience of generations became crowded into a few years. Our young men became intoxicated with the new wine of freedom. They became mad for the service of the country but there was no scope. Their beneficent

activities began to extort admiration of the Government itself. But the appreciation was short-lived. When it was discovered that the province might be a network of organisations and that the enthusiasm of the young men was not merely a temporary excitement, their activities began to be misunderstood and viewed with suspicion. They began to receive attention from the police and the repressive legislation that followed I have already placed before you. Their activities were smothered. They were not allowed to meet and talk and work. The emotional temperament of the impatient and impetuous youth must however find out its own outlet. The bureaucracy instead of guiding this new spirit threw all possible obstacles in the way of their self-realisation. The budding activities of our young men entitled them to the whole-souled and unwavering support of a determined and united nation. They looked forward towards their leaders. They wanted opportunities. They wanted field of action. The leaders did not help them ; possibly they could not. Thus both the Government and the leaders failed in their duty. For the popular leaders it was a sin of omission but, so far as the Government was concerned, it was a sin of omission and commission. The result was discontent and distrust which under further repression eventually slid into disaffection.

Discontent leads to constitutional agitation :

Constitutional agitation leads to repression : Repression leads to disaffection : Disaffection leads to political crime. Every political crime leads to further repression and every fresh act of repression breeds a more acute form of revolutionary feeling and leads to an expansion of the movement. Thus we are oscillating like a pendulum between the repressive and the revolutionary movements, sometimes the repressive measures getting the better of the revolutionary and sometimes the revolutionary movement getting the better of the repression but each getting stronger and stronger as the result of continuous struggle between the two. Sometimes the police overcome the revolutionary party, and believe that they have annihilated them, but only to be disillusioned by their recrudescence shortly after, in such a form as to elude their grasp and vigilance. In the result both are becoming stronger and stronger. The C. I. D. are being multiplied *ad infinitum*. Who knows that the party of violence will not some day burst forth with unexpected and increased virility. In any case the position of the people of the country is anything but enviable. They are between two fires : between the revolutionaries on one side, and the police on the other. Verily, Brother Delegates, we are between the Devil and the Deep Sea. It is only the Europeans who are not in any way affected like the lucky man

sitting in the comfortable arm-chair and looking through the window at two combatants fighting below and breaking each other's head. The Europeans laugh and enjoy the fun and we in our agony know not what to do.

This, Brother Delegates, is the inner psychology of the revolutionary movement. I wonder if the Government has ever cared to understand the inner thought-current of this movement. To fight the revolutionary party successfully you must know their origin, know their desires and know their aspirations. You must find out the real inner malady of which the revolutionary crimes are but an outer symptom. The physician who mistakes that which indicates the disease for the disease itself and whose attention and prescription are confined to the former without any reference to the latter is bound to fail. The physician who without due regard to the etiology of the malady tries to combat the symptoms is more a quack than a physician and is bound to drive it deeper. You must eradicate the poison which has contaminated the body politic and not apply medicine merely for that whose function in the economy of nature is merely to call attention to that poison. What is it that is wanted by this revolutionary party? What has made them revolutionary? That is the question of all questions. They are not ordinary criminals.

They are not actuated by motives of personal gain. What is their goal? Evidently responsible Government is their goal. Nothing short of it will satisfy the revolutionary party and nothing more seems to be the ambition of the revolutionary party. Every Indian knows that the continuance of British connection is essentially and indispensably necessary for the national development. That being the real position, it goes without saying that repression will create more evils than it can possibly cure. Internment cannot act as a Hollways' pill to cure this evil, deportation cannot be a panacea of all distempers of the body politic. You cannot satisfy a man's hunger for freedom by depriving him of his personal liberty. You cannot satisfy a nation's hunger for food by killing all her industries. Self-Government and Self-Government alone is the proper remedy.

But, Brother Delegates, do not for heaven's sake misunderstand me. I do not for one moment mean to justify or extenuate the *methods* employed by the revolutionaries. Allow me, Brother Delegates, as your President, to say this in the most unequivocal terms that the members of the revolutionary party are misguided and are treading on dangerous ground. Their methods are criminal, illegal, outrageous and revolting to the religious instincts of the Indian mind. They are pre-eminently un-Indian. They will hamper

the true progress of the country. Allow me in the name of the whole country to condemn the movement. But at the same time, Brother Delegates, allow me in the name of this Conference also to condemn the policy of internment and deportation. (hear, hear). I condemn internment as a matter of principle because an admittedly war-measure is being used for purposes quite foreign to its scope. I condemn internment because of the un-English procedure adopted in administering the Defence of India Act which is bound to lead to a negation of the elementary rights of a citizen. I condemn internment because of the cruel treatment to which the internees are subjected and to which I shall address myself presently. Last, though not least, I condemn the internment policy because it has given a blank cheque to the C. I. D. who, like the spoilt children of an over-indulgent doting father thinks they can do anything and everything with impunity.

Internment—What it means

Brother Delegates, I now come to the most tragic part of the story of this legalised oppression known by the dignified name of internment and deportation. How shall I describe to you the intolerable sufferings of the people interned and deported? They are too painful for description. I shall not dwell upon the

privations and inconveniences to which the detenus are subjected to. I shall not describe the horrors of the environments which they are forced to put up with. I shall not remind you of the snakes which constituted the only companions of some of the detenus in their exile. I shall not tell you how these ill-fated people have to remain alone in a solitary house in a solitary place even during illness. I shall not tell you about the low and ill-ventilated huts in which they are accommodated. I shall not tell you how many of them have not been allowed access to any books and newspapers in spite of repeated requests. There are hardships to which the detenus have by this time reconciled themselves. But I would ask you, Brother Delegates, to ponder for one moment, over the circumstances that brought about the untimely and tragic death of Professor Set and Chandicharan Nag. I want to ask you to dive deeper into the mysteries of the Dulanda house and the cells their cloistered seclusion in. I would ask you to imagine and realise what impelled some young men to seek repose in death. I would ask you to enquire into the circumstances which in some cases caused insanity and goaded others to go on a hunger strike. I would ask you to remember the legacy of debt which Sachindra has bequeathed to you in his last testament, I mean the debt of duty you owe to the unfortunate detenus. I

would ask you to hold before your eyes the picture of Jyotischandra Ghosh—the ghastly picture of death-in-life. I would ask you to listen to his mother's cry. It is not mother Dakhyaniy's cry. It is the cry of mother Bengal. It is the cry of the mother of outraged humanity. Verily, gentlemen, my flesh creeps, my blood curdles, my voice chokes, my pulse beats slower when I recall to mind the ghastly tragedies of so many blasted lives.

Gentlemen, our impotent wailings have only brought forth the Rowlatt Committee and God alone knows what new shackles are being forged in its anvil. The history of commissions in India is the history of forced capitulations of her rights and liberties.

Brother Delegates, the internment-policy is sought to be justified on the ground that the political crimes have ceased. It is said in a tone of exultation "Look here, Bengali politicians, the internments and deportations have annihilated the revolutionary party." The argument is however vitiated by the fallacy of *Noncausa Procausa* wherein purely accidental circumstances are put forward as causes, just as the Norwegians attributed the disappearance of the fish from their coast to the introduction of inoculation or just as the wearing of an amulet is sometimes believed to be the cause of prosperity. Even a beginner of

logic will tell you that an antecedent is not always the cause (*post hoc ergo propter hoc.*) A palm fruit may fall as soon as a crow sits upon it and yet the crow is not the cause why it falls. But I forget logic is never the best point of those who revel in political superstition. There may be a temporary lull just at the present moment in revolutionary crimes. But suspension is not cessation. Temporary inactivity of a volcano does not prove its total extinction any more than a superficial scab argues the healing of an internal sinus which may still be eating into the very vitals. It does not require much political insight to anticipate the effect on the body politic if the root cause be not removed in time. Revolutionary activities are always fitful. Besides, the suspension of these activities does not show that all the interned people are guilty. The fallacy of the stock argument can be exposed by an illustration. Suppose the criminal conspiracy consisted of one thousand members who were all interned. Suppose also that over and above these 1000 men another thousand men absolutely innocent were also interned without any justification. Can it be seriously argued that as the crimes have ceased, these last mentioned 1000 men were also revolutionaries? If the C. I. D. had chosen to intern all the gentlemen now present in this Conference, was it not equally open to them to

argue that as the crimes have ceased you are all revolutionaries. I wonder an argument like this should be put forward from any responsible quarters. But there is really no controversy now that the Defence of India Act and that the internment policy have failed. The very terms of the references of the Rowlatt Committee say that difficulties have arisen in dealing with criminal conspiracies and that fresh legislation is necessary to enable the Government to deal effectively with them. Public opinion has disapproved the formation of the Committee. I want to warn the Government that the enactment of a permanent law in the place of the existing Defence of India Act will transfer both the Government and the people from the frying pan into the fire.

Gentlemen, I have criticised the Government and the bureaucracy freely and without reserve. I should like to say a few words about ourselves. May I have your permission, Brother Delegates, to make some observations about the public life of Bengal? If you claim the right to criticise the Government whenever they are open to criticism, it is only fair that we should not spare ourselves. (hear, hear). Mere criticism of others without self-introspection is bound to produce a demoralising effect on us. There was a time, gentlemen, when Bengal was at the fore front of public life in India. But I am not sure if we are not

losing that position. (hear, hear). Look at the colossal work which Madras is doing in pushing forward the Home Rule movement. (hear, hear). Look at the stupendous organisation in Bombay for carrying on 'propagandist work throughout that Presidency. Look at the triumphal tour of Lokamanya Balagangadhar Tilak in Maharashtra for organising the people in support of the cause of Home Rule and for raising money towards the expenses of the Home-Rule deputation in England. Even the Central Provinces and Berar have placed one lac and twenty-five thousand rupees in the hands of Mr Tilak. This ought to be an object lesson to us. It is no doubt the duty of the Government to kindle a desire for Self-government in the people. That of course you cannot expect here. It is therefore all the more our duty to take up this educative work. I know there are difficulties. I know what an amount of attention they will receive from the police. I know the great personal risk of those who will undertake this work. I know they will be shadowed by the C. I. D. I know they will run the risk of losing their personal liberty. I know we will have to fight against heavy odds. But ours is a righteous cause. God is with us, the world forces with us, the Times spirit is with us. Brother Delegates, if Bengal fails in her duty at this critical juncture of her history, God will curse her. We will

be accountable to the posterity. Gentlemen, I crave your indulgence to utter one word of caution. We have some sham counterfeits amongst us who pose as public men in Bengal. You must beware of them, Brother Delegates, the public life of Bengal requires complete overhauling. (hear, hear).

I have got still another note of warning to sound. The interest of the country requires that we should work in absolute harmony at this critical time. We cannot afford to have dissension now. (hear, hear). Brother Delegates, I appeal to you to close up the rank and present a united front. You must fight shoulder to shoulder. Our enemies want to divide us. They want to create a gulf between the so-called moderates and the so-called extremists. But, Brother Delegates, where is the difference of opinion and difference of principles? We are neither moderates nor extremists. We are all Home-Rulers. Scratch any Indian, you will find in him a Home-Ruler.

Gentlemen, there is one matter which I feel bound to notice here. I refer to the administration separation of more than 5 millions of our kith and kin from the parent stock, I mean the people of Sylhet, Cachar, Goalpara under the Assam Administrative and of Manbhum, Singbhum under the Lt. Governor of Behar and Orissa. This is an old grievance and should be removed. All the Bengali-speaking

districts should be placed under one Provincial Administration.

Brother Delegates, it is customary in Presidential address to deal with all matters affecting the well-being of the people and the country. But I have advisedly confined myself only to those two subjects which are now uppermost in the national mind viz. Reform and Repression. I have done so to emphasise the supreme importance of the matters. Brother Delegates, the people demand that the policy of repression must at once be abandoned and such constitutional reforms must be introduced as will establish complete popular Self-government. Self-government conferred on India will save India and will save the Empire. It is only then that the East and the West in twain—will meet.

Brother Delegates, before I bid good bye to you I take the liberty of making an appeal to my countrymen—Assert all your lawful rights manfully; Offer lawful resistance whenever encroachment is made thereupon; Respect the rights of the Empire but assert yours.

Be polite to all, but not subservient to any: Stand erect and meet everybody as a man should meet a man: Overhaul and purify the public life of Bengal: Be hard taskmasters in dealing with the popular representatives and leaders (hear, hear): Let there be no moderates and extremists, but only Home-Rulers (hear, hear):

Preach the gospel of Home-Rule to our people and establish Home-Rule Leagues all over the country (hear, hear) : Organise a band of political missionaries and sannaysis to carry on this propagandist work and start a daily paper (hear, hear) in simple and homely Bengali and thereby educate the masses : Organise a system of national education : Take to Commerce and Industry and float national banks : Multiply co-operative Societies under non-official agency and control : Lift up the depressed classes : Improve the sanitation of the villages : Be true to yourself and to your country.

Brother Delegates, I thank you most heartily for the kind and patient hearing which you have been pleased to accord to me. I wish you a graceful Session of the Conference. (Loud cries of 'Bande Mataram').

At the request of the President the Hon'ble Mr. Surendranath Banerjee welcomed the Chandannagar volunteers, who were present at the Conference, in an inspiring speech.

Subjects Committee

The President then asked the delegates to send in the names of the members of the Subjects Committee.

Mr. J. N. Roy suggested that instead of electing

members of the Subjects Committee, the whole house should go into the Subjects Committee so that everyone might have an opportunity to discuss the subjects to come up before the Conference.

Mr. Jogendralal Choudhury seconded the proposition.

The Hon. Mr. Abdul Kasem opposed it saying that it would only protract business.

Babu Sasankajiban Roy also opposed Mr. Ray's proposal.

Mr. Surendranath Banerjea said that they would not enter into any discussion over the matter.

Mr. J. N. Roy said that if there was any opposition he would not press his suggestion.

The President said that as there was a difference of opinion they should abide by the rules.

The delegates then sent in the names of their representatives on the Subjects Committee which sat till late hours in the evening.

Second Day's Proceedings

Sunday's proceedings began with the singing of the beautiful lines of Rabindranath's ode to the Motherland beginning with the ever familiar but still ever new, 'Oh ! thou charmer a voice of melody'. There was an appreciable accession too to the number of Delegates, Babu Hirendranath Datta, Babu

Krishnakumar Mitra and Mr. D. C. Ghosh being among the new arrivals this day. The appearance of Prof. Ramamurti in the pandal accompanied by Mr. B. G. Sathe, his Private Secretary put unusual life and animation in the Conference.

The first two resolutions—one expressing loyalty to the Throne and the other expressing the sense of loss of the Conference at the death of six illustrious servants of India— Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir William Wodderburn, Mr. A. Rasul, Sir Chandramadhab Ghosh, Babu Saradacharan Mitra and Babu Sasindrachandra Sinha were then put from the Chair and carried unanimously, all present standing.

The fourth resolution on the Bengalees and the Army, was next taken up.

The Hon. Mr. B. Chakravarti moved :—

(a) That this Conference expresses its satisfaction at the opportunity temporarily offered to the Bengali people for military training in (i) The Bengalee Battalion, (ii) The Indian Defence Force, (iii) Bengal Light Horse.

(b) That this Conference further expresses its satisfaction at the removal of the racial bar against the admission of Indians to the commissioned ranks of the Army but urges the appointment of Indians of proved merit to the ordinary commissioned ranks.

(c) That this Conference urges upon the

Government the necessity of opening up Military career for the young men of Bengal and demands :—

(i) that adequate provision be made under the Indian Defence Force Act for giving military training to as large a portion of His Majesty's Bengali subjects as may offer themselves for such training ; (ii) that qualified Bengalees may be enlisted in His Majesty's regular army and that in respect of pay, promotion, equipment, prospects and status, they be placed on a footing of equality with His Majesty's European British subjects ; (iii) that adequate provision be made in this country for the training of qualified Bengalees as officers in His Majesty's Army and Navy.

Mr. Chakravarti said :—I have said it before and I say it again that unless and until we join the army not in hundreds and thousands but in hundreds of thousands we shall not be able to secure Home Rule. The man who is able to defend his home, is entitled to Home Rule. You cannot expect that you will have the easier part of the administration and somebody else will do the fighting for you. My regret is that when after 31 years of rebuff, we have got the door open, the number of men who have joined is not large enough.

Mr. Chakravarti then narrated how the Government made concessions from granting a Double Company in 1915 to the granting of a regiment. The

speaker then said: you can hold any number of congresses, any number of conferences but unless and until you are prepared to fight for your home, Home Rule is an impossibility, for even if you get it, you can't retain it.

With regard to the Defence of India Force also Mr. Chakravarti complained that the response was disappointing. He next made an appeal to parents of youths not to stand in the way of their sons joining the army,—he had found in some cases that the youths were very willing to join while the parents prevented them. If the Bengali race were to continue to exist respected by the rest of the world, the tenderness of parents is to be modified to a considerable extent—they should prefer their sons' dying in the battlefield to their staying at home doing nothing and dying of malaria.

In regard to the Bengal Light Horse Mr. Chakravarti said that he would rather have the whole of his audience follow him to Calcutta and join the corps at once. He exhorted the young men present to join in large and yet larger numbers.

Why should we fight—there is so much distinction between Europeans and Indians—say some people. He would ask if there were 100,000 men in the army to-day, will not the state of things be far different?

Mr. A. N. Choudhuri in seconding the resolution

in Bengali said that he was no orator—his voice as a speaker had seldom been heard except at recruiting meetings, and if he remembered aright, he was drawn only once into speaking in the rooms of the Indian Association.

Early marriage, said he, was at the root of the evil of much of our inactivity. The speaker said that as a man, who hailed from Pabna, he remembered one adage, after the sacred thread, marriage. A lad of 18, who failed at the B. A. examination—it is so difficult, indeed, to pass it due to the multiplicity of subjects English, Geography, Asutosh Mukherjee (laughter)—and when he failed, what came after? Marriage and in its train came the issue of the marriage, and then infantile liver, hankering after service and what not. Tied to the apronstrings of the wife, with the baby in one arm and a bottle of D. Gupta's malaria mixture in the other—are they to perpetuate this state of things?

If recruiting had not been successful to desired extent, the fathers and guardians, he regretted to state, were no little to blame. Lifeless recruiting committees brought into being to curry favour with the District Officer or a connection which is considered to be the stepping-stone to a Rai Bahadurship, well, these will be worse than useless. They had their recruiting meeting held the other day at Uttarpara but the net

result ? Not even one recruit ! “Give us ten recruits as the best honour you could give us”, shouted the lads, “and take your garlands back.” And were they not justified in what they said ? He organised a recruiting meeting after the yearly passes and failures at the Entrance examination, but with such poor results. Our lads, continued the speaker, aspire to be a Sir J. C. Bose, a B. Chakravarti, a Sir A. Choudhury, a Sir Asutosh Mukherjee—who would aspire to rise in the honourable profession of arms ? There are those who are willing that there should be recruits, only if their sons would not swell their ranks. The speaker had an old mother ; did she object when one of her sons took up service in the I. M. S, and went to the battlefield ? He was in the Mahsud campaign and has come back safe and sound. Look at the Calcutta Light Horse people, look at the Calcutta University Corps lads, look at the Indian Defence Force. Unless they join the army, they can never expect to be men.

The President next called upon Prof. Ramamurti to speak to the resolution. Speaking in fluent Hindi the professor supported the army resolution in a stirring speech, which was very highly appreciated. He said that he was glad to have arrived at the right moment to be connected with such an important resolution. Bharatvarsa their native land, said he, has all along been noted for her valour, for her chivalry

and for those who were the embodiments of those qualities, her heroes. Does not this mark India off from the rest of the world? If recruitment had field anywhere, it was in their own country, a country noted, not only for her heroes but also heroines. The brave ladies of Rajputana live in the pages of history, Anusiya, Arundhati, and other valorous ladies—what country but India gave them birth? He recounted the story of the Andhra lady, who when she found that her husband had fled from the field of battle, welcomed him back home with a saree and two pieces of bangles, etc. kept at the door. When her lord wanted to know why those were there, the heroic lady replied "Since you have fled from the battlefield, you have transformed yourself into a woman and these articles which are for woman's wear, would suit you much better than weapons which a man should handle."

Prof. Ramamurti continuing said that when the war broke out, he wrote to Lord Hardinge expressing his willingness to place his personal services in the matter of recruitment, stating that he could easily raise double the number of men required at the time. Unfortunately, however, the matter was referred to the Commander-in-Chief, to this and that official, and ultimately the prayer was rejected with an expression of regret. The papers in this connection with the official replies

were then read by Mr. B. Chakravarti. Prof. Ramamurti, in conclusion, made a warm appeal for enlistment in the army so that we may be able to maintain our honour, and prestige, and restore the good name we enjoyed in the past.

Babu Sachindranath Mukherjee of Calcutta in supporting the resolution delivered an impassioned and inspiring address. For ages the Bengalees were not eligible for the army. That was a matter of shame but time was a great healer. It was their good fortune that a Bengalee battalion had been formed and that only one hundred men more are required to complete the regiment. He made a stirring appeal for the formation not only of a battalion but a regular Bengalee division.

At this stage Babus Surendranath Banerjee, Motilal Ghosh, Hirendranath Datta, and Haradaya Nag came in amidst continued and loud cheering, the audience on their feet cheering for minutes together. When it had died down, the speaker resuming, referred to the ovation itself as a happy augury, and called upon the people to follow their tried leaders, the heroes of a hundred fights. He urged the doing away of all distinction of race and creed and colour bar in the army. The speaker concluded with a brilliant peroration which had a highly impressive effect.

Babu Haradaya Nag, who also supported the resolution, referred to an article in the 'Patrika' he wrote urging the repeal of the Arms Act. Is it to be wondered at if they were innocent of what War meant? He would not even be surprised if that wonderful innovation 'Tanks' some people took to mean to be so many ponds (laughter). Babu Sureschandra Samajpati, Mr. A. C. Sen and Babu Kshitischandra Mukherjee also supported the resolution which was carried.

Babu Surendranath Banerjee next rose to move the Self-government resolution, as outlined in the following, barring the details :—

That this Conference, while according its cordial support to and urging the acceptance of the Congress League Scheme of constitutional reforms, so far as it relates to the constitution of the Government of India demands that as the first substantial step towards the progressive realisation of Responsible Government in India, a full and complete measure of Provincial Autonomy be granted at once to Bengal as per scheme mentioned below :

The functions of the Government of India should be confined to—

- (1) Military and Naval affairs.
- (2) Foreign and Political relations.
- (3) Relation with other parts of the Empire.

(4) Legislation affecting Inter-provincial fiscal relations.

(5) Legislation as regards Tariffs, Customs duties, Taxes to be applied for Imperial purposes, Regulation of Coinage and Weights and Measures, Banking and Currency regulations.

(6) Treatment, Surveillance and Expulsion of Foreigners.

(7) Colonization and Emigration.

(8) Patents Inventions and Protection of the products of Intellectual Activity.

(9) Protection of Indian Trade abroad.

(10) Inter-provincial Railways, Roads, Waterways.

(11) Posts and Telegraphs.

(12) All other matters in regard to which uniform legislation for the whole of India may be desirable.

In moving the resolution the Hon'ble Mr. Banerjee said :—

Brother Delegates,

My first words would be that this scheme which is laid before you is in advance, I will say somewhat in advance, of the Congress scheme. The Congress scheme does not provide for Responsible Government. It provides for a transitory stage which leads and must lead to Responsible Government. The Congress scheme gives the people complete power over the Executive, but does not invest the legislature, and

this is the crux of Responsible Government with the power of dismissing the Executive. Under the Congress scheme you may censure the Executive, you may record your votes against any motion brought up by the Executive, but you have no power to dismiss the Executive. This is the difference between that scheme and the one here. The essential point of difference between the Congress scheme and the Bengal scheme is this. While the Congress scheme gives full authority over the purse to the popular representatives and a great measure of authority over the Executive it does not arm them with power to dismiss the Executive. The Executive is not responsible to the representatives of the people or to the constituencies, but the essence of Responsible Government is that the Executive must be responsible to the electorate. The Congress scheme makes the Executive responsible to Government. But in justice to the Congress scheme it is my duty to point out that that scheme must also lead to Responsible Government. It is a scheme of transition. Suppose the legislature goes on passing votes to censure on the Executive, goes on negativing all official Bills to create a block, a situation in which the Executive is forced to a position of submission to the legislature. The Bengal scheme is thus in advance of the Congress scheme.

Ladies and gentlemen,—Last year when I had the

honour of addressing this Conference not exactly in this place but elsewhere, I indulged in somewhat optimistic anticipations regarding the great happenings which were about to take place. I ventured to indulge in a bit of Brahminical prophecy and what I anticipated is about to be realized. We are, I hope, on the eve of entering the promised land. The land to which the hopes and aspirations of a distinguished galaxy of Indian leaders pointed—of Ranade, Gokhale, Anandamohan Bose, W. C. Bonnerjea and others. These illustrious workers are no more with us. They are looking down upon us from their high places in Heaven. Their hopes are about to be fulfilled. They sowed the seeds and it is now for posterity to reap the harvest, the rich fruits of their labours. We bow to this immortal band of workers for they had been the pioneers in the field. Let us be grateful to their memories.

Brother Delegates, on the 20th of August last Mr. Montagu delivered his notable message promising Responsible Government to the people of India, Responsible Government to be attained by progressive stages and a substantial advance is to be made at once. But there is a qualifying clause in this statement to which I desire to call your attention. It was said by Mr. Montagu that the time for the introduction of Responsible Government and its measure were to be

determined by the Government of India and the British Democracy. The people of India were to have no share in that. Mr. Montagu has however gone far beyond his promise. He has come out to India. He is here and I on behalf of this Conference accord him our respectful greetings. He has seen many of our leading men. I believe he has seen almost everybody around me here on this platform. He has received deputations from public bodies, Indian and Anglo-Indian. He has collected information and he is now formulating his proposals. What those proposals are we don't know. But the fact remains that whatever these proposals may be they must necessarily be largely determined by the voice and vote of the people of India. He has also seen Anglo-Indian and official representatives. I am not permitted to pry into the secrets of his prison house. But the impression that has been left upon my mind is that he is one of the truest and noblest friends of India. Although officially it was announced that you were to have no vote or voice in the determination of the great constitutional issues that were pending yet you have been consulted and your views must influence the final conclusions. Let us temper our aspirations with justice, self-restraint, moderation and perception of the practicability of the situation, they are the sovereign qualities of our race and India will not be

wanting in those qualities when the time comes to consider Mr. Montagu's proposals. But we are not quite out of the wood. There are serious difficulties in our way. We have to look these difficulties in the face. For instance, it has been persistently said and it is a myth but hydraheaded it rears its head again and again, it has been persistently said that we have no electorates. This is a crucial objection. But have we no electorates? We have the special Mahomedan electorate which returns members to the Legislative Councils. Have we not electorates for our Municipalities, our District and Local Boards? Don't they discharge their duties in a satisfactory way? Can they not be trusted to return members to the Legislative Councils? Therefore I say we have the electorates. Don't give us a bad name and then refuse us the boon.

It is further urged that our people are mostly illiterate. Well, gentlemen, before the Reform Bill of 1832 in England they had full-fledged Parliamentary institutions and electorates. I may remind you of what Mr. George Yule said and my memory carries me back to the year 1888. He said that in 1888 the percentage of literates in India was greater than the percentage of literates in England in 1832. Then what about the Barons of Magna Charta? The original copy of the Magna Charta is in the Bodleian

Library in Oxford. I went to the Bodleian Library and studied the Charta. I was then young and was a student.

A voice :—You are still young.

Mr. Banerjea :—I think so. I am at least quite as hard-working as any one of you. However, I went to this library and studied the Magna Charta. There was a man with me who was my guide. He said, "Sir, this writing is not the handwriting of the Baron. Somebody wrote it for him." And yet these were the Barons who wrung the Magna Charta from king John. Bear in mind that electorates are created by the bestowal of Responsible Government. Give us Responsible Government and suitable electorates will spring up spontaneously. No training is so effective as the training in the school of Self-government, in the school of free institutions. That would be a practical training which cannot be supplied by any amount of literacy.

There are other difficulties. There is the Anglo-Indian opposition. My friend the President has referred to it in stinging terms. He has taken the whip and has laid it on the back of the oppositionists. I should feel very unhappy if it was laid on my back. I am an old man, I am prepared to have a little sympathy with them. But the whole fabric of Anglo-Indian opposition has tumbled down. The Bombay

Anglo-Indian community is reasonable. When the Anglo-Indian community speaks in one province the voice is re-echoed in other provinces and it reacts upon Anglo-Indian sentiment elsewhere. There is a change also in Madras, barring the 'Madras Mail.' So far as Anglo-Indian opposition is concerned, I am disposed to think that the Anglo-Indian mind has assumed a more rational attitude. But we have Lord Sydenham and his going to reckon with. I was talking to an English journalist the other day. I am not permitted to mention his name. He was touring through this country to acquaint himself with the political situation created by Mr. Montagu's announcement. What did he think of Lord Sydenham and party? He said, "They don't count." Lord Sydenham has no weight in British politics. Sir John Heneett's position is very much the same. We may, therefore, make light of that opposition.

But the opposition of the Civil Service is formidable indeed. If I were a member of the Civil Service, I would probably do the same. They have great power, great prestige, great privileges, if you want to take them away you must expect. We must therefore count upon their opposition. There is the mighty rock ahead. Are we to dash our heads against it? No, that opposition will disappear before the resistless current of public opinion. Let us be united, Hindus

and Musalmans all sections of the community—let us stand shoulder to shoulder on the one common platform of the motherland—let us march forward to reach our goal. If we are united, there is no power on earth, bureaucratic or otherwise which can resist the national demand or the fulfilment of the national aspirations.

Now, I desire to refer to a matter which you, sir, have discussed at length in your address, I mean the Congress Deputation. Should we or should we not send a deputation to England at once? We discussed the matter at a meeting of the All India Congress Committee held at Delhi. About 40 of us attended that meeting. We were of the opinion that the present time was not opportune for sending a deputation to England. England is now engaged in the greatest war in her history. The war absorbs the entire attention of the English people. It is a time of great trouble and anxiety. I know the English people well. I know how conservative they are. If you send a deputation now, the average Englishman will say, "We are in trouble, we have hardly any leisure to listen to you. We have sent to India a capable minister who is high in our confidence. We are awaiting his return; let him make his recommendations and then we shall hear what you have got to say. For the present, it is premature for you to make

your proposals." The motion in favour of the immediate despatch of a deputation was negatived by the casting vote of Mrs. Besant who was president.

We want Self-government. We want it for the efficiency of the administration. The bureaucracy has been tried and the bureaucracy has failed. If there is a revolutionary party, who is responsible for it? If there is a party of anarchists, have they been able to suppress it? The answer is in the negative. The revolutionary party which exists and the anarchism of which we hear cases now and then are largely due to the failure of the administration. Let me ask—is there a revolutionary party in England or in France or in America?

But there was one in Russia because of misgovernment in that country. There was one in Ireland and why? Because the whole history of British administration of Ireland until quite recently is a record of maladministration. It has partially disappeared because they are within sight of Home Rule. In India it will disappear as soon as Responsible Government is granted. Therefore the existence of a revolutionary party bears distinct evidence of the failure of the Bureaucracy. I will do the beauracracy the justice to which it is entitled. It has secured order and tranquillity. But it has outlived itself. It has become old, antiquated, obsolete, and must

make room for a form of Government in which the voice of the people should be supreme. We want Self-government for purposes of Legislation. We want the separation of Judicial and Executive functions. If we had Responsible Government we should do it in 24 hours. We want that all the Bengali-speaking population should be included in Bengal. If we had Responsible Government we should do it in six months' time. I was talking with a high official having a hand in the determination of our political reforms. He said to me, "We cannot trouble ourselves about that". We therefore look forward to Responsible Government as the means of winning back to us our lost brethren. Then there are those repressive laws, the Defence of India Act, Regulation III of 1818, the Seditious Meeting Act, the whole series will disappear when we have Responsible Government.

Further we want Responsible Government in the interests of the Empire. The British Empire is now engaged in the greatest war in its long and chequered history. The Empire wants men. We in India are as multitudinous as the stars of Heaven, as countless as the sands of the sea. Let the Government take us into their confidence, treat us as equal citizens, give us the status of equal partners in the Empire and great will be our response to the call for men. And

lastly, ladies and gentlemen, we want it for the highest interests of humanity. In the morning of the world we were the spiritual teachers of mankind. Before Rome was built, before Babylon and Nineveh emerged into the historical arena, our ancestors had established great Empires, founded flourishing cities and had established great systems of ethics and religion which even to this day excite the admiration of the world. In the early days we were the teachers of mankind. We want to play the same role in the future. We want to emancipate Europe from the fetters of a gross materialism. But we must be free ourselves, we must be emancipated politically and socially before we can free others and fulfil our high destiny. So upon the grounds of administrative efficiency, of national well-being, and in view of the larger interests of humanity we want Responsible Government, and so long as life and strength endure we shall be ceaseless in our efforts to attain it.

The Hon'ble Mr. Abul Kasem supported the resolution.

The resolution was further supported by Rai Jadunath Mazumdar Bahadur, Moulvi Mohamed Yeasin, Babu Sasankajiban Roy, Mr. S. P. Roy, Moulvi Akram Khan, Babu Becharam Lahiri, Babu Surendranath Sen, and the Namasudra representative Sj. Bhegai Halder of Barisal.

The resolution was next put to the vote and carried unanimously, the only amendment moved by Mr. Mujibar Rahaman being in regard to the percentage of Mahomedan representation which should be as laid down in the Congress League scheme, an amendment which was accepted. In regard to other details of the resolution—Mr. Surendranath Banerjea, as the mover did not associate himself with salt being made a part of the Provincial revenue, as in the resolution and with the figure relating to the number of members in the Provincial Council, which, it is proposed in the resolution, it should contain.

Internment

Mr. B. K. Lahiri moved the following Resolution :

(a) "That this Conference protests against the policy of the Government regarding internments and deportations under the Defence of India Act and the Bengal Regulation III of 1918 respectively and demands—

(i) ' That the Defence of India Act so far as it is not exclusively a war measure but refers to the internal administration of the country be repealed.

(ii) That the Bengal Regulation III of 1918 be also repealed.

(iii) That such of the detenus against whom the Government has sufficient evidence for conviction be tried in the 'ordinary courts of law.

(iv) That the rest of the detenus be at once set at liberty, and

(v) That any idea of further repressive legislation be abandoned.

(b) That alternatively this Conference is of opinion that in view of the coming political changes the only measure calculated to remove the revolutionary feeling in the country and to ensure the allegiance of all shades of political opinion to the new order adumbrated in the announcement of the 20th of August, 1917, is the grant of general amnesty to all political prisoners now being detained under the Defence of India Act and the Regulation III of 1818.

(c) That this Conference condemns the appointment of the committee announced on December 10th 1917, inasmuch as the avowed object is not to remedy the evil but to introduce fresh repressive legislation arming the Executive with additional and more drastic powers.

(d) That this Conference expresses its satisfaction at the promise of the Government of India to appoint non-official visitors and urges that such visitors should consist only of non-official, independent persons who command the confidence of the country.

(e) That this Conference, which appreciating the spirit of the Government of India in so far as it seeks to allay public consternation by the appointment

of an Advisory Committee, urges that it should consist of two High Court Judges, one of them being an Indian and further urges that provision be made so as to give legal assistance to the persons arrested and opportunity be given to them for cross examination and that further provision be made to supply them with a copy of the charge and adduce evidence in defence, without which the Advisory Committee is ineffective.

(f) That this Conference further urges that pending the repeal of the Act, order for arrests should be made by a Secretary of the Government upon careful examination of such information as may be placed before him.

(g) That this Conference approves of the establishment of and expresses its confidence in the Bengal Civil Rights Committee of which Sir Rasbihari Ghosh is the President and entrusts to it all work in connection with internments and deportations.

(h) That this Conference urges upon the people of Bengal to make the internment week of Self-denial organised by the Bengal Civil Rights Committees a success.

It was over the substitution of wording in the last line namely "is ineffective" into "will not be able to discharge its duty properly" that there raged the hottest discussion, Mr. J. N. Roy being for the

amendment, while Mr. Jitendralal Banerjea strongly opposed it. He said, "I have considerable difficulty in speaking to this resolution, because though nominally I am supposed to be seconding the resolution, as a matter of fact it seems that I am moving an amendment. You will appreciate the difficulty of the position and allow me therefore to direct my remarks to the points of difference between the resolution as accepted at the Subjects Committee meeting last night and amendment moved by Mr. J. N. Roy to-day (A voice : Mr. Roy has moved an amendment.) The difference lies in this. You know of course that in response to Mr. Surendranath Banerjea's resolution at the Imperial Council, Sir William Vincent has foreshadowed the formation of an Advisory Committee of sorts—I deliberately call it an Advisory Committee of sorts because even Babu Surendranath Banerjea will have to admit that it was very different from the Advisory Committee that he wanted both as regards the personnel and also as regards a far more important matter, viz. its scope and function. As a matter of fact, Babu Surendranath Banerjea wanted bread and Sir William Vincent has given us stone and we are asked by Babu Surendranath Banerjea to be enthusiastic over it (laughter). I cannot convince myself—I cannot convict myself as being irresponsible if I refuse to be enthusiastic over such a

questionable gift. Gentlemen, confine your attention to the Advisory Committee that has been proposed first as regards the personnel. The Advisory Committee that has been foreshadowed consists wholly of officials, whereas Mr. Banerjea wanted a committee in which there should be a non-official element, nay, in which the non-official element should predominate.

But it is said that one of the two members is to be a High Court Judge. Well, gentlemen, we have passed the age of illusions. We do not attach any magic virtue to the words 'High Court Judges' (hear, hear). We, lawyers, know better than even Mr. Surendranath Banerjea because we have every day to appear before the High Court Judges—we know what at present they are. They are by no means infallible and I may say in India they are often ready to oblige the Executive (hear, hear). I challenge any one to contradict me. But that is not all. Even if these members had been all that we wanted, what could they do under the restricted nature of their power? As it is what are they going to do? Sir William Vincent distinctly says that their function will be confined to "sifting the evidence that is placed before them." Mark the passive voice "the material that is placed before them." They cannot call and examine witnesses. They cannot get outside information. They have to depend wholly upon police papers, upon

materials supplied by the police—materials untested by cross-examination by any legal authority. Upon such ex-parte material supplied by the police—and in this country we know the police very well—I say, even if an angel from heaven were to come down and pass decision upon that, would you say that the decision would be correct and free from errors? (hear, hear). Therefore, as at present foreshadowed, the Advisory Committee will be useless, nay it will be more than useless (hear, hear); it will be positively mischievous because henceforth the Executive will point to it and say: “You have been complaining of police methods and police information but here are two High Court Judges, judicial officers who give their sanction to Police methods, how can you then complain? (Loud cheers). After having waxed enthusiastic over the appointment of an Advisory Committee how can you then turn round and say “Here has been an injustice”? Well, gentlemen, by accepting this Advisory Committee, you shut your own mouth, you gag yourselves. And I say, therefore, think for yourselves not once, not twice but again and again before committing yourselves to this hasty, rash, ill-considered and mischievous step. Gentlemen, I feel diffidence in putting myself against men like Babu Surendranath Banerjea and even Mr. J. N. Roy. But believe me when I say that I should

like to agree with him if I could. It is with no sense of factious opposition that I make this proposition, but in my heart of hearts I am convinced that you are making a fatal mistake, a mistake which you will not be able to undo in the future. Therefore, I again say, before voting upon this resolution, think well, do not be misled by names, however great, by authorities, however supreme. No one wishes to minimise the great services of Babu Surendranath Banerjea—myself least of all. My reverence for him is as great to-day as it was 15 years ago when I first took the dust of his feet. But men are fallible, they are liable to errors of judgment—and who will say that in this instance his zeal has not overborne his discretion? With these words I commend the resolution to your acceptance (cheers).

So strongly opposed Mr. Nisith Sen and Mr. Sasankajiban Roy, Mr. J. B. Sen and others. As the discussion raged hot and hotter, it was Babu Hirendranath Datta who threw oil over the troubled waters. He said that he had no objection to the use of the word 'properly' and that it was the right word to use in that connection.

The resolution was next put to the meeting and carried.

The other resolutions related to the repeal of the Arms Act, the Press Act, the Boy Scout movements,

Re-union of Bengali-speaking Districts with Bengal and Change of Constitution of the Provincial Conference Committee etc. which were carried 'nem con'.

Lastly came the pleasantest part of function—that of thanks-giving.

Babu J. L. Banerjea referred in felicitous terms to the lavish generous cordial and kindly welcome accorded them by the Reception Committee and the soul of hospitality—the Chairman Hon'ble Rai Mahendranath Mitra Bahadur. He thanked also warmly the volunteers who had been the pink of courtesy to them and who looked so well to the comfort and convenience of the delegates.

Mr. B. Chakravarti next rose to thank the President for the services rendered by him, and for the excellent manner in which he discharged his duties. The best introduction, said Mr. Chakravarti, of Akhil Babu to him, was that Akhil Babu was a friend of Mr. Rasul. Since then he had come to know that in Akhil Babu there was a man who was prepared not only to sacrifice his comfort and his money but also his life. Akhil Babu was younger in age, but so old in wisdom in ripe judgment, in his devotion to the cause of the country. The courage, the lucidity and the masterly way in which he tackled the internment problem extorted admiration,

he trusted, even from members of the Government. (A voice : From the country as well). Certainly—returned the speaker.

Babu Akhilchandra Datta in rising to respond, said, "When the heart is full, the mouth speaketh not." He found himself in that position. As for Mr. Rasul, to whom Mr. Chakravarti has referred, he had the highest admiration for his late lamented friend. They called him in their provincial dialect 'Khati Sona' or unalloyed gold. He accepted the honour of the Presidency of the Conference, not because he deserved them (cries of "You deserve, you deserve") but because such a compliment might be an impetus to him to be worthy of such compliments (cries of "You are, you are"). He said he was a camp-follower—it was their kindness which had elevated him to that position. In bidding them good-bye, he said that he was overpowered with feeling and all that he could say then was that so far as sincerity goes, he would never be unworthy of their confidence, and would never give a dishonest vote.

Before the Conference dissolved, the President proposed to send a message of good will to the Home Rule Deputation to England led by Mr. Tilak.

The Conference then broke up amidst shouts of 'Bande Mataram.'

Some Relevant Information about the Conference

(1)

Notice

(Published in the 'Bengalee' on 30.1.1918)

At a meeting of the Hughly Howrah District Association a Reception Committee was formed to make arrangements for the next session of the Bengal Provincial Conference to be held at Chinsurah during the Easter holidays. The Hon'ble Rai Mahendra-chandra Mitra Bahadur as President of the District Association has issued a circular letter to the leading inhabitants of the District of Hughly and Howrah asking for their help and co-operation in the organisation of the Conference. A meeting of the Reception Committee will be held at Dutch Villa, Chinsurah at 1. p. m. on the 3rd February next to elect office-bearers of the Conference.

(2)

Notice

(Published in the 'Bengalee' on 12.2.1918)

On the 12th January, at a meeting of the Hughly-Howrah District Association a Reception Committee was formed to organise this session of the Bengal Provincial Conference at Chinsurah during the Easter holidays. At the first meeting of the Committee held on the 3rd February at Dutch Villa, the following gentlemen were elected office-bearers :

Chairman—The Hon. Rai Mahendrachandra Mitra Bahadur.

Vice-Presidents—Rai Binaynarayan Kundu Bahadur, Babus Jogendralal Chowdhury, Brindaban-chandra Datta, Tinkowri Bose, Barodaprosad De, Rameschandra Goswami, Kumar Bhupendranath Mukherjee, Hon'ble Babu Mahendranath Roy, Babus Asutosh Bose, Upendranath Mandal, Nabagopal Bose, Sitalchandra Banerjee.

Joint Secretaries :—Babus Prasaddas Mallick, Dasarathi Ghosh, Gokulnath Sen, Amulyachandra Datta, Nityadhan Mukherjee, Khagendranath Mitra, Narayanchandra Ganguly, Pannalal Seel, Mihirlal Das, Narendralal Chowdhury, Lalitmohan Mitra, Jatindra-nath Mukherjee, Munshi Khairat Ali, Babu Debendra nath Mandal.

Treasurer—Babu Dinonath Sen, Asst. Treasurer—Babu Nagendranath Sadhu.

A resolution was passed to the effect that any person who is an inhabitant of the District of Hughly or of Howrah and above the age of 21 years is eligible to be a member of the Reception Committee on payment of a minimum subscription of Rs 10 and that in case of any objection with regard to any member by not less than 10 members of the Committee such objection shall be decided by the Reception Committee at a meeting to be held for the purpose after notice served

upon such person. The Secretary has been authorised to ascertain the views of the recognised District Associations by the 20th instant for the selection of the President of the Conference in conformity with the rule of the constitution of the Bengal Provincial Conference as passed at the Comilla Session. It has been decided to suggest the name of Sir Rabindranath Tagore in this connection and to hold the meeting of the committee on the 24th instant for the election of the President.

Amulyachandra Datta.

Joint Secretary

Reception Committee

3

Circular letter

The following circular letter was issued to the various District Associations by Moulvi Izad Bakhsh Secretary, Reception Committee, Bengal Provincial Conference, Chinsurah :—

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that in pursuance of a resolution passed at the last session of the Bengal Provincial Conference at Bhownipur, the Conference will be held this year at Chinsurah on the 30th and 31st March during the Easter holidays. Rule X of the constitution of the Conference as framed at the

Comilla Session in 1914 requires the Reception Committee to ascertain the views of the Associations recognised by the standing committee of the Conference as to the selection of a President for the Conference. In conformity with this rule I request you to send in your nomination to me by the 20th instant.

I am also to request you to proceed to the election of delegates to the Conference and send me as early as practicable a list of the names of the delegates likely to attend the Conference.

4

Notice

(Published in 'The Bengalee' on 24. 2. 18)

A meeting of the Reception Committee of this session of the Bengal Provincial Conference will be held to-day (Sunday the 24th February) at Dutch Villa, Chinsurah, at 4. p. m. to elect the President of the Conference. The presence of the members is earnestly solicited.

5

Notice

(Published in 'The Bengalee' on 20. 3. 18)

The Bengal Provincial Conference meets at Chinsurah on Saturday and Sunday, the 30th and

31st instant. All associations and public bodies are requested to elect their delegates at an early date under the rules of the Conference—delegates may also be elected at public meetings convened for the purpose. Applications for Delegation Certificates should reach the undersigned a week before the date of the Conference. Every Delegate should be above the age of 21 and pay a delegation fee of Rs 2.

Delegates are requested to bring their beddings and mosquito curtains with them.

Chinsurah on the E. I. Ry and Naihati on the E. B. Ry are the nearest stations to Chinsurah and volunteers will be in waiting at those stations to receive the delegates. For the convenience of the delegates and Reception Committee it is desirable that the Secretaries of Associations or Presidents of public meetings returning delegates should inform the undersigned about the number of delegates likely to attend the Conference and the time of their arrival.

N. B.—The dates previously fixed have been altered in compliance with a requisition made by Babu Matilal Ghosh, Messrs. B. Chakravarty, C. R. Das and others.

Izad Bakhsh

Secretary

6

*An Editorial Note of the 'The Amrita Bazar
Patrika' on 21. 3. 18*

Within a few days the Bengal Provincial Conference will hold its sittings at Chinsurah. We have no doubt that the people of Hughly will try their level best to make it a complete success, but then they must lose no time in creating an enthusiasm for it in their district. No district is so well educated as their own. They have one special advantage over their brethren in other parts of Bengal—they have got a number of municipal towns and big villages close to each other which are centres of education and enlightenment. They can easily get up big public meetings there and carry on a Conference propaganda before hundreds and thousands. They may take up not only such general questions as Home Rule, Internment Policy etc. but also such purely local matters as the Damodar floods, the Partition of Midnapur, Malaria, Water Supply etc. A meeting should at once be convened at Chinsurah and it should be followed by others at Howrah, Uluberiah, Bally, Uttarpara, Serampur, Konnagar, Bhadreswar etc. In this way, the whole district should be made interested in the case of the Conference. Those districts, which have not yet elected their delegates should do it without further delay.

7

Notice

(Published in 'The Bengaler' on 30. 3. 18)

The Bengal Provincial Conference meets at Chinsurah on Saturday and Sunday, the 30th and 31st March, 1918. The Hon'ble Babu Akhilchandra Datta of Comilla is the President-elect. Delegates are requested to intimate to the Secretary of the Reception Committee the date and hour of their arrival and to bring their beddings and mosquito curtains. The delegation fee is Rs. 2. Special arrangement has been made for 'Pardah' ladies. In view of the importance of the question to be discussed at the Conference the delegates are requested to muster strong on the occasion. The Conference sits on Saturday at 1 p. m. Press tickets to be applied for at once.

8

Election of Delegates

From Bogra

In a public meeting held on 21st March, twelve gentlemen were elected delegates to attend the Bengal Provincial Conference from Bogra.

From Calcutta

(Indian Association)

At a Committee meeting held on the 18th March the following members of the Indian Association

were elected delegates to the Bengal Provincial Conference at Hughly during the Easter Holidays :—

Dr. P. K. Acharjya, Moulvi Nazimuddin Ahmed, Abdul Lalif Ahmed, Babu Haranchandra Banerjea, Dr. Pramathanath Banerjea, Babus Surendranath Banerjea, Jitendralal Banerjea, Subodhchandra Banerjea, Satyacharan Banerjea, Bhabasankar Banerjea, P. Banerjea, A. C. Banerjea, Bipinchandra Basu, Sureschandra Basu, Jatindranath Basu, D. N. Basu, Girindranath Basu, Gopendranath Basu, Rev. K. N. Basu, Babus Jatindramohan Basu, Satyananda Basu, Basantakumar Basu, Bhupatinath Basu, Narendrakumar Basu, Bijoykrishna Basu, S. N. Basu, Sachindraprasad Basu, B. K. Basu, Amulyakumar Basu, Sasisekhar Basu, Baradakanta Basu, Sudhirkumar Basu, H. M. Basu, Saratchandra Basu, Dr. M. N. Basu, Babus Dhirendranath Basu, Jnanendranath Basu, Benoykumar Basu, Phanindrakumar Basu, Amulyaratan Basu, Krishnachandra Basu, Nanilal Bhattacharjya, Ramratan Bhatta, D. N. Bagchi, S. R. Banerjea, Gaganchandra Biswas, Bhabanath Biswas, Gokulchandra Boral, Ramanimohan Chatterjee, Trailokyanath Chatterjee, Satischandra Chatterjee, Mrityunjoy Chatterjee, B. C. Chatterjee, Santiram Chatterjee, Jatindranath Chaudhury, J. Chaudhury, P. Chaudhury, Hon'ble Kisorimohan Chaudhury, Babus B. K. Chaudhury, Upen Dey, Phanindralal Dey, S. C. Chakravarty, Kaliprasanna

Chatteraj, Nirmalchandra Chunder, Lalitmohan Das, Dr. D. R. Das, Babu Bamanchandra Das, Hon'ble Ramanimohan Das, Babus Anathnath Das, C. R. Das, Surendranath Dasgupta, Satischandra Dasgupta, Pransankar Dasgupta, Jogeschandra Dey, Akshaykumar Gupta, Pransankar Dasgupta, Jogeschandra Dasgupta, Akshaykumar Dey, Phanindralal Dey, S. C. Dey, Pasupati Dey, Kumar Rabindrakrishna Dey, Hon. K. B. Datta, Babus Binodebihari Datta, Charuchandra Datta, Hirendranath Datta, Haranchandra Datta, Asok Datta, J. N. Ghosh, Sir Rasbihari Ghosh, Babu Atalbihari Ghosh, Hon. Devendrachandra Ghosh, Babus C. C. Ghosh, Matilal Ghosh, Amritachandra Ghosh, Srikali Ghosh, D. C. Ghosh, Dr. J. N. Ghosh, Babus Golaplal Ghosh, Prabhaschandra Ghosh, D.M. Ghosh, K. P. Ghosh, P. N. Ghosh, S. N. Ghosh, Satyendramohan Ghosh, B. C. Ghosh, Rajkumar Ghosh, Nalinkisore Ghosh, H. K. Ghosh, Charuchandra Ghosh, B. L., J. N. Ganguly, Anathbandhu Guha, Fazlul Huque, Pandit Gispati Kavyatirtha, Hon. Abul Kasim, Babus Debiprasad Khaitan, Gopikrishna Kundu, Haridas Lal, B. K. Lahiri, Sudhirkumar Lahiri, Herambachandra Maitra, Mathuranath Maitra, D. N. Maitra, Jatindranath Maitra, Hon. Prabhaschandra Mitra, Krishnakumar Mitra, Sailendranath Mitra, Kumar-krishna Mitra, Sukumar Mitra, B. L. Mitra, M. C. Mitra, Purnachandra Mitra, Jnanapriya Mitra, Sir

Binodechandra Mitra, Babus Satischandra Mitra, Sarat-Chandra Mitra, Sachindralal Mitra, R. D. Mehta, Jogendranath Mukherjee, Purnachandra Mukherjee, Jatindranath Mukherjee, Saratchandra Mukherjee, Hon. Ambicacharan Mazumdar, Babus Satischandra Mazumdar, Jogeschandra Mazumdar, Jogendranarayan Mazumdar, Surendranath Mallick, Dr. S. R. Mallick, Babus Nagendrakrishna Mallick, Upendrakrishna Mandal, Rev. B. A. Nag, Babu Kshitischandra Neogy, Dr. Purnachandra Nandy, Rai Bahadur Srinath Pal, Hon. Radhacharan Pal, Babus Satischandra Palchaudhury, Krishitadas Roy, Prithwischandra Roy, Sasankujiban Roy, Muralidhar Roy, Nibaranchandra Roy, Atulkrishna Roy, Sureschandra Roy, Surendranath Roy, Satyendranath Roy, Manmathanath Roy, Bhudebchandra Roy, Hon. Mahendranath Roy, Babu Madhabgobinda Roy, Hon. Bhabendrachandra Roy, Babus J. N. Roy, Ambicacharan Roy, S. C. Roy, Khagendra bhushan Roy, Dhirendrachandra Roy, Gopaldas Roychowdhury, Debkumar Roychowdhury, Kalidas Roychowdhury, Moulvi Majibar Rahman, Babus N. N. Rakshit, Satyaprasad Sarbadhicary, Kumar Arunchandra Singha, Babus R. S. Sarma, B. N. Sasmal, Anandachandra Sen, Bisweswar Sen, Rai Bahadur Baikuntha Sen, Babus Hemendranath Sen, Pratapchandra Sen, J. B. Sen, Kaviraj Hemchandra Sen, Babus Kshitischandra Sen, Gunadacharan Sen,

Surendranath Sen, Upendranath Sen, P. N. Sen, M. N. Sen, M. L. Sen, Satischandra Sen, Jibandhan Sen, Dhirendranath Sen, Birendranath Sen, Sailendranath Sen, Kaviraj Nanigopal Sen, Babus Ganeschandra Sen, Charuchandra Sanyal, Hon. Dr. Nilratan Sarcar, Babus Satyendranath Sarcar, Jatindranath Sarcar, P Sikdar, Chandrakumar Vaidya.

From Chinsurah

At a public meeting held under the presidency of Babu Dasanathi Ghosh M. A. B. L. Vakil, High Court, at Chinsurah, 10 gentlemen were elected delegates for the Provincial Conference at Chinsurah.

From Chittagong

At a general meeting of the Chittagong Association held on the 18th March, 25 gentlemen were elected delegates to the Bengal Provincial Conference at Chinsurah.

From Comilla

The following gentlemen were elected delegates to the Provincial Conference, Chinsurah, from the Tippera People's Associations :—

Babus Upendranath Mitra, Lalitchandra Das, Abanimohan Ghosh, Ramanimohan Datta, Sachindrakumar Roy, Dhirendranath Datta, Haradaya Nag,

Rameschandra Som, Jnanadacharan Guha, Mahendra Karmakar, Upendranath Ghosh, Rajkamal Nag, Durgamohan Roy, Aswinikumar Chakravarty, Bipinbihari Guha, Kalikumar Guha, Jogendrakisore Das, Gobindachandra Saha, Kailaschandra Das, Girindramohan Naha, Abinaschandra Bhattacharji, Abinaschandra Sen, Bipinbihari Bose, Nagendrakumar Roychoudhury, Karunakisore Kar, Syamacharan Datta, Bipinchandra Datta, Sasikumar Pal, Tarabhushan Pal, Rajanikanta De, Umeschandra Datta, Bipramohan Bhowmik, Pratapchandra Gupta, Jaminikumar Sen, Mohinimohan Chakravarty, Sasadhar Roy, Chandroday Bidyabinode, Upendrakumar Roy, Hemendrakumar Das, Nripendrachandra Das, Nripendrachandra Datta, Jatindramohan Ghosh, Upendrachandra Chakravarty, Krishtokumar Bhattacharji, Saradakanta Das, Anangamohan Ghosh, Ambikaprasad Das, Bhubanchandra Bhattacharji, Chandrakisore Chakravarty, Jitendra-chandra Datta, Prakaschandra Das, Mathuramohan Deb, Nabadwipchandra Das, Kaminikumar Datta, Satyendrachandra Sen, Kunjabihari Ghatak, Pratapchandra Bhattacharji, Manoranjan De, Kshetramohan Roy, Abdul Gaffur.

From Hughly

At a public meeting of the Hughly People's Association held on Sunday the 17th March 1918,

under the Presidency of Babu Sibchandra Das, in the hall of the Ghutia Bazar Arya Library, the following gentlemen were elected delegates for the Bengal Provincial Conference held on the 30th and 31st March at Chinsurah :—

Babu Mihirlal Das B. L., Dr. Prasaddas Mallick, Babus Narendralal Chowdhury (Zamindar), Debnarayan Pyne, Rameschandra Pyne B. L., Asutosh Pal, Dr Kanailal Dey, L.M.S., Dr Manilal Mallick L.M.S., Babus Kalachand Mallick, Abinaschandra Seal, Pearysantosh Pal, Nagendrakumar De, Srischandra Mallick, Debendranath Pal, Lalitmohan Som, Nagendranath Mukherjee B.L., Nandagopal Banarjee, B. L., Jogeschandra Mukherjee, Kshitischandra Mukherjee, Jogeschandra Datta, Ganendranath Bose, Gokulkrishna Seal, Surjyakumar Mukherjee, Lalitkumar De, Radhikaprasad Singha, Jatischandra Mallick, Jyotirmay Sarkar, M. A. B. L., Hrishikes Mazumdar B. L., Satischandra Mukherjee, B. L., Satischandra Ghosh, B.L., Rajanikanta Sengupta B.L., Satya Banerjee M.A.B.L., Atulchandra Mukherjee B.L., Murarimohan Som B. L., Harimohan som B. L., Gopallal Mukherjee B. A., Bimalchandra Mukherjee B.L., Dr. Saratchandra Chatterjee, Moulvi Khairat Ali, Babus Gourhari Som M. A., Anukulchandra Sen.

From Khanakul

The following delegates were elected by the Khanakul Krishnagar Samaj—

The Hon'ble Dr. D. P. Sarbadhikari, Dr. S. P. Sarbadhikari, Babus Dwijendranath Bose, Bar-at-Law, Mohinimohan Chatterjee M. A. B. L., Attorney-at-Law, Bijaygopal Sarkar M. A. B. L., Surendranath Bose, M. A., Bibhutibhushan Khan M. Sc., Satischandra Chowdhury, M. A., Jatindranath Bose M. A., Kabiraj Kisorimohan Gupta M. A., Babus Narayanchandra Ganguli B. A. B. L., Bankimbihari Mukherjee B. A., Amarendramohan Banerjee B. A., Nabagopal Datta B. L., Jatindranath Roy, B. L., Dr. Manmathanath Ghosh M.B., Dr. Mrigendranath Bhattacharjee L.M.S., Babus Dharanimohan Roy, Zamindar, Lalitmohan Mitra B. L., Bipinbihari Ghosh, Vakil High Court, Manmathanath Roy, Nagendranath Sarbadhikari, Bijaygopal Bose, Haridhan Kundu, Asutosh Banerjee M. A., Mollah Ataul Huq, Mollah Anaul Huq, Munsif Abdur Rahaman, Zabad Ali Mollah, Babus Angirus Addy, Amulyadhan Biswas, Chandramadhab Samanta, Atalbihari Ghosh M. A. B. L., Nilambar Banerjee, Charuchandra Ghosh, and Jatindramohan Chowdhury.

From Khulna

At a meeting of the Khulna People's Association held on the 19th March, 23 gentlemen were elected

delegates to the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Chinsurah on the 30th and 31st March. These include one Pandit, two editors and twenty lawyers.

From Mymensingh

The Mymensingh Association elected nine gentlemen as delegates to the Bengal Provincial Conference at Hughly.

From Nabinagar

At a meeting held on the 18th March of the Nabinagar Bar Association, seven gentlemen were elected delegates to the Bengal Provincial Conference at Hughly.

From Nadia

At a meeting of the Nadia District Association held at Krishnagar Town Hall on the 20th March, under the Presidency of Babu Jyotiprasad Chatterjee, the following resolutions were unanimously passed—

“This Association fully support and accord their hearty approval to the Home Rule Deputation, which is proceeding to England.”

“This Association also authorise the deputation to demand Home Rule on the lines laid down by the Indian National Congress and All India Moslem League.”

Seventeen gentlemen were elected delegates to the Bengal Provincial Conference at Chinsurah.

From 24 Parganas

All members of the 24 Parganas District Association were elected delegates to the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Hughly on the 30th and 31st March. Delegates Certificates were sent to those who applied for the same enclosing a two pice postage stamp to the Secretary at 38, Hazra Lane, Kalighat, Calcutta.

From Ranaghat

At a general meeting of the members of the Ranaghat Bar Association held on Thursday, the 21st March at the Bar Library premises it was resolved that the following gentlemen be elected delegates to the Bengal Provincial Conference at Chinsurah on the 30th and 31st March—

Babus Nagendranath Mukherjee, B.L., Vakil, President, Bar Association, Banamali Banerjee, B. L., Pleader, Narendranath Sarkar, B.L., Secretary Bar Association, Mohitkumar Mukherjee, Pleader, Ratischandra, Pleader, Jatindramohan Ghosh, B.L., Assistant Secretary, Bar Association, Satischandra Mitra, B.L., Vice-President Bar Association, Upendranath Biswas, B.L., Pleader, Hughly, Santosh

kumar Basu M. A., B.L., Vakil, Calcutta High Court, Ganendranath Palchoudhuri, Zamindar, Chairman, Ranaghat Municipality, Nisapati Banerjee L. M. S., Vice-President, Local Board, Abanikumar Basu, Medical Practitioner, Lalgopal Pal, Zamindar and Merchant, Girijanath Mukherjee, Editor 'The Bartabaha', Kumudnath Mallick, Zamindar.

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An Editorial Note of 'The Bengalee' on 29.3.18

Bengal Provincial Conference

To-morrow the Bengal Provincial Conference opens its session at Hughly. This is the second time that the Conference assembles at Hughly, the first meeting having taken place ten years ago under the presidency of Mr. Baikunthanath Sen. On the last occasion, the chairmanship of the Reception Committee was filled by the late Babu Bipinbihari Mitra. We are glad that this year, our esteemed friend, the Hon'ble Rai Mahendrachandra Mitra Bahadur has been elected to this office. He and his colleagues are giving themselves no rest for the success of the Conference. There are several important subjects agitating the mind of the public at present, which will come up for discussion at the Conference. We hope that in this momentous period in our history, the Conference will record on them

the considered opinion of Bengal. Elaborate preparations, we understand, have been made by the people of Hughly for making the Conference as successful as any of its predecessors has been. It is to be hoped, that considering the importance of the session, there will be a strong muster of delegates from all parts of the Province. We learn with satisfaction that the leaders of the Mahomedan community in Hughly are cordially co operating with their Hindu brethren for the success of the Conference. This is as it should be. The Hughly Conference, therefore, meets under very encouraging auspices and we must trust, it will be a record session from every point of view.

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*A letter to the Editor 'The Anrita Bazar
Patrika' published on 21.3.18*

Sir,

I am surprised that the Associated Press correspondent at Dacca has been perfectly silent about certain interesting proceedings of the Dacca People's Association, which will go to show that the tactics of the Indian Association have been adopted even in some Mufussil towns. I am, therefore, for the benefit of your readers sending you this letter and I trust you will publish this in your much esteemed journal.

A few days ago, when the question of the election

of the President of the Provincial Conference was before the country, the Dacca People's Association as usual was asked to send their recommendation for the Chairmanship. The question was an important one, and as such should have been placed before the general meeting of Dacca People's Association. The Secretary of the People's Association however instead of convening a general meeting called a meeting of the Executive Committee and taking advantage of the absence of some of the members who take interest in the affairs of the Association, had the name of Babu Anandachandra Roy, President of the Association sent in. This fact became known to other members of the Association some time after the name was sent. Now a large number of the members thought the nomination of Babu Anandachandra Roy made by the Executive Committee was unconstitutional and arbitrary and some of them even had serious objection to the nomination of Ananda Babu. Consequently a requisition signed by 31 members was submitted to the Secretary of the Association asking him to convene a general meeting of the Association to consider the whole question. The Secretary in response to the requisition summoned a general meeting on the 3rd of March. This was communicated to the members.

Now, on the afternoon of the 2nd March nearly 90 members who had not paid up their subscription for

various reasons got intimation from the Secretary to the effect that their names were struck off the list for non-payment of subscription.

Now such a course of action was not within the powers of the Secretary, for under the rules of the Association, the names of the defaulters were liable to be removed by the general committee only after one month's notice had been given to all. But no such thing was done in this case. And it may be further noted that all defaulters were not treated in the same way, only those who objected to the nomination of Ananda Babu were so treated.

On the 3rd of March, these members went to 'Roy House' where the general meeting of the Association was held. On arriving there these members found that they were being treated as outsiders, but they challenged the authority of the Secretary to strike out their names in the way above referred to and insisted on their right as members. Then they proceeded with the election of a Chairman of the meeting in the absence of their permanent President Babu Anandachandra Roy, who was in the house, but who did not at first come to the meeting for reasons best known to himself. But when a President was elected by the members present Babu Anandachandra Roy appeared on the scene and claimed his right to preside as the permanent President and insisted that

those whose names had been struck off by the Secretary should go out of the meeting.

The members present however protested against Ananda Babu's arbitrary interruption as they already commenced business with Kamini Babu as their duly elected President. At this Anandachandra Roy asked the President to hold their meeting elsewhere. This, as could be expected, created a good deal of excitement. The members felt insulted and some of them were about to leave the house. But at this point Babu Srischandra Chatterjee took up a very interesting position. He said that as they were invited to attend the meeting of the People's Association there they had every right to remain unless they were bodily removed. At this, Ananda Babu said that, as that house was his, he would not allow them to hold their meeting there. Sris Babu then said that it was the meeting place of the People's Association for the time being and, as such, they were within their rights to stay in the place. Excitement was getting stronger and stronger when Babu Rasikchandra Chakravarty and P. K. Basu Bar-at-law came with the olive branch. They pointed out to the Secretary that he had exceeded his powers by arbitrarily removing the names of the members for non-payment of subscription. The Secretary Sarat Babu said, that whatever he had done, he had done in consultation

with the President Anandachandra Roy and the Assistant Secretary.

After a little while the Secretary admitted his mistake and withdrew his cancellation of the names of members.

After the conclusion of the truce as above mentioned the requisition was withdrawn as it was felt that there was no more any necessity for it as the question of Chairmanship had already been decided in favour of Hon'ble Babu Akhilchandra Datta. But before the proceedings of the day closed, it was suggested that in future the meetings of the People's Association should not be held in any private individual's house but at a public place. * * *

'An old Member'

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An Editorial Note of 'The Bengalee' on 31. 3. 18

At the Hugly Conference yesterday, the Hon'ble Rai Mahendrachandra Mitra Bahadur delivered an able and interesting address as Chairman of the Reception Committee. Within a short compass, he referred to the past glories and the present importance of Hugly Chinsurah and made a careful and suggestive survey of the present political situation. Referring to the war, the Chairman said with a touch of legitimate pride that every province had been

“straining every nerve to help the Empire with men and money and the Indians had proved themselves eager to vindicate the manhood of the nation and uphold the honour of the Empire.” Incidentally, he remarked that recruiting in India from the intellectual classes would be greatly helped if the doors of the Army were thrown wide open for them and they were not kept beyond the charmed enclosure of commissioned ranks. The internment policy of the Government serves also as a great obstacle in the way of rapid recruiting in Bengal. Turning to the Sindhubala affair, the Chairman made a great hit by saying “So long we had been told by the officials that every case of internment was decided upon after mature consideration by the higher officers of Government. But the case of the Sindhubalas gave the lie direct to that assurance and revealed a state of affairs of which every civilized Government should be ashamed. The attempts of the Governments of Bengal and India to whitewash this deed of high-handedness have failed and the system, responsible for the arrest of these two innocent ladies, stands self-condemned.” No more crushing indictment of the policy and system underlying the internment activities of the Government could be made in a nutshell. In connection with the promised appointment of an Advisory Committee, the Chairman’s words will be read with interest :

“I consider it exceptionally fortunate that the Government of India have realised the danger of allowing the people to think that the liberty of none of them was worth a moment's purchase. They have practically adopted Babu Surendranath Banerjea's proposal to appoint an Advisory Committee to enquire into each case of internment. We accept this concession with thanks but urge that the old and obsolete method of condemning men unheard should be done away with altogether. The proposed Committee should consist of members well-known for independence. Otherwise the object of the Government of India would be frustrated.” The Rai Bahadur brought informed and pointed criticisms to bear on the subjects of education and sanitation. He observed with great force :—

“No Government should raise revenue for the purpose of hoarding money and whenever a surplus is achieved, it should be spent either in reducing taxation or on schemes of social reform and development of beneficial services. The people are the real masters of the country and it is the duty of every government to educate them so as to make them realise the responsibility of their position and the value of their rights.” On the subject of sanitation the Chairman had illuminating remarks to offer. He pleaded strongly for the uprooting of malaria and the

extermination of cholera, which are preventible diseases and not visitations of Providence and laid his intimate knowledge and experience under contribution in dealing with the question of water-supply. "Fuller powers" he suggested "must be given to the local bodies to spend money on works of public utility. Everywhere members should be empowered to elect their Chairman and the incubus of the commissioned should be removed—the Chairman being placed in direct contact with the Member-in-charge of the department. That will be the proper step to take in the matter and one that will be consistent with the policy of granting us Responsible Government." In this connection, the Chairman adverted to a crying public grievance relating to the effect of the Septic tanks of the mills situated on the banks of the river Hughly. "The prevalence of cholera in riparian areas" he remarked "is in many cases, the effect of the pollution of the river water due to the discharge of the contents of these tanks. The discharge of the contents of these tanks also outrages the feelings of the people." Alluding to the question of industrial development, the Rai Bahadur urged the Government to adopt a policy of protection for fostering industries and making India independent of foreign countries in the matter of her needs. The Chairman concluded his address with an apposite reference to the subject of Responsible

Government. "We want Self-Government within the Empire," he observed in eloquent words, "and India will not be satisfied with anything less than that. It is no longer a distant ideal to be achieved after generations—but the ideal before us and within easy reach. Self-Government was granted to the Boers within a few years of their subjection by the British. And we in India who had willingly placed the sceptre in the hands of the British more than a century and a half before now, are we not yet fit to be granted Self-Government? Surely it will add to the strength of the Empire and the cause of civilisation to have a united and reconciled India as a self-governing part of the great British Empire." Wise words are these and it is to be hoped that the British Government will rise to the height of the occasion and give India her proper place in the Empire. The Hon'ble Rai Mahendrachandra Mitra Bahadur is an old veteran in our public and civic life and his address, we need hardly say, was fully worthy of the occasion.

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*An Editorial Note of 'The Amrita Bazar
Patrika' on 2.4.18.*

We congratulate the people of Hugly Chinsura on the success of the Provincial Conference which was held at their chief town on the 30th and 31st March.

The gathering was thoroughly representative and influential and there was not a district which was not represented by one or more delegates ; almost all our prominent leaders who take active interest in politics were present. Great enthusiasm prevailed and the great assemblage vividly realised the sad condition of their motherland and keenly felt the necessity of united action for the purpose of removing the one hundred and one political disabilities under which they were labouring. In the young President of the Conference, the Hon'ble Babu Akhilchandra Datta, they found an ardent nationalist who kept the whole audience enthralled for an hour and a half by his splendid speech, full of wisdom and patriotic fervour. In the Chairman of the Reception Committee the Hon'ble Rai Mahendrachandra Mitra Bahadur, they found an old and experienced gentleman of mature judgment who also delivered a fine speech, which was highly appreciated by the assembled delegates and visitors for its sound sense and patriotic zeal. We shall offer our comments on these speeches in due course.

Practically one subject absorbed the whole attention of the Conference. Need we say what this was ? It could not be otherwise, for that is just now the uppermost thought in the mind of the Bengali public. As we have said, again and again in these

columns, the policy of internment and deportation is eating into the vitals of the nation and creating the deepest discontent in the country. Everyone feels that the reign of law has disappeared and he is living under a lawless law. Where is the vaunted liberty of the British subject in India when he can be spirited away and interned or imprisoned on the report of a policeman or even that of a spy or an approver recruited from the drags of society ? “To create a calm atmosphere in the land, which is so urgently necessary at a time when England is in a most critical condition, what is essential is to release the hundreds of young men confined in jail or in particular localities as political suspects and repeal the two monstrous Acts”—that was the main burthen of song at the Conference. The President of the Conference and the Chairman of the Reception Committee and most of the speakers demanded it in bold and unequivocal language and the whole audience cheered them whenever they made this demand.

The Anglo-Indian papers may be foolish and ignorant. They may demand more and more repression, utterly oblivious of its dire consequences. But the rulers are responsible men. They cannot afford to be blind and unwise. What did the last Provincial Conference prove ? It was that the policy of internment and deportation was making the people mad. That was

the feeling not of one man or a handful of men but of the entire nation—from the highest to the lowest. Ask any one—even the most subservient Raja or Maharaja—and they will all say the same thing in one voice that the activities of the C. I. D. armed with two lawless Acts are creating the bitterest feeling against the administration. To turn a deaf ear to this universal complaint and go on adding more and more bitterness to the mountain load of discontent already created by pursuing doggedly the present pitiless policy of repression is bound to result in grave disaster.

There may not be a well-organised and wide-spread conspiracy in Bengal. But there is no doubt that individual revolutionaries are scattered all over the province. There is also no doubt that revolutionary feeling is growing apace. Why is this ? There is no revolutionary feeling in England, France or America. Why should it be then in India and spreading in all directions ? The reason is very plain. In England, France and America the administration is good and carried on by the people, and discontent and disaffection cannot be generated there. There is revolutionary feeling in India because of misrule by an alien, unsympathetic bureaucracy, the people having no hand in the administration of their own country. There was anarchism in Russia and Ireland owing to mal-administration. The Russian Empire has been torn

into pieces. In view of the grant of the Home Rule the Irish people are divesting themselves of their revolutionary feelings. The poison and its antidote are thus plain to the meanest apprehension. Bad Government produces revolutionary feelings, good government kills them.

The rulers will only intensify the discontent, disaffection and revolutionary feeling that prevail in the country by refusing the release of the detenus who have been robbed of their liberty without any judicial trial. The same result will also be produced in an aggravated form if they continue to ruin the prospects of our young men by arresting them as police suspects or if they give more power to the police to meddle with their liberty. The main object of the Hughly Conference was to make the rulers realise this plain fact. If they realise it and adopt the proper remedy, we shall of course be profoundly grateful to them. If they, however, choose to follow the advice of the Anglo-Indian press, well, may God then protect India and the British Empire. We believe in the efficacy of sincere prayer in times of calamity. Nothing should be done to hamper the Indians from sending up their heartfelt prayers for the welfare of the British Empire with which their destiny is bound up, at an awful moment like this.

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An Editorial Note of 'The Bengalee' on 2. 4. 18

Bengal Provincial Conference

The Bengal Provincial Conference met at Hughly on Saturday and Sunday last. The Hon'ble Mahendrachandra Mitra Bahadur, the Chairman of the Reception Committee and leader of the Hughly Bar and of the local Indian community, and his colleagues, Babu Amulyachandra Datta and others were incessant in their efforts to discharge their duties as hosts and to contribute to the success of the Conference. All honour to these devoted and selfless men, but if the truth has to be told, it must be said that the Conference did not in its size and proportions come up to the expectations of its friends and organizers. The attendance was unsatisfactory, and that of delegates from the moffasil, disappointing. The causes are not far to seek. The bulk of the educated community, sober, sensible, moderate men, are getting sick of the personal squabbles, which have now for some time disfigured the public life of Bengal ; and this spirit of conflict and controversy was even somewhat in evidence in the deliberations of the Conference. We trust that after the lesson that has been taught—after the warning which the good sense of the country has given in clear and unmistakable terms, all this will cease. Domestic quarrels have ruined India in the past. They may

seriously handicap her progress towards her political emancipation. This spirit is especially undesirable at present, but is unfortunately manifest in some of the younger men who seek to be political leaders, but who ignore the truth that discipline is the essence of all political organizations, and that they can presume to command. It is all very well to talk of principles and convictions and parade one's independence in an ostentatious fashion. But as Burke has told us in a passage which embalms an eternal truth that there is no such thing as "Principle in politics, but that it is circumstances which impart to every principle its colour and its discriminating effect.' It is not by the open defiance of the authoritative opinions of leaders, while outwardly professing the utmost veneration for them that political battles are won and the cause of the country is served. To seek to discredit political leaders who have done great service to the country is not only to offer them a personal affront (which may not matter very much) but it is to repudiate their authority in the country, discount their work and ignore them as practical assets of great value. It is a species of political suicide which may be gratifying to the vanity of those who indulge in it, but it is doing a distinct dis-service to the country and the attitude of the Provincial Conference at Hughly showed that the country will have none of it. Discipline is the soul of

political organisations, and veneration for leaders who not only shout but do real work, is the first condition of success in political warfare. The Irish party in the House of Commons were a rabble, ineffective for all practical purposes and for service to Ireland, until they submitted to discipline and became inspired with one mind and purpose, first under the leadership of Isaac Butte and then of Charles Parnell. We do not wish to elaborate this point, but we trust that the lesson which has been taught by the Hughly Conference will be borne in mind by those whom it concerns. The speech of the Chairman of the Reception Committee the Hon'ble Rai Mahendrachandra Mitra was in every way worthy of the man and of the occasion. The venerable leader of Indian Society at Hughly spoke with real patriotism by that moderation and self-restraint which so pre-eminently distinguished him. We hope the younger men will follow his example both in the matter and the manner of what they have to say. The Hon'ble Babu Akhilchandra Datta, the President of the Conference, fully justified his election to the office to which he was called. His speech was confined to the two burning problems of Self-Government and Internment, and it was a masterly statement, courageous and outspoken, tempered with moderation and self-restraint. His conduct in the Chair was admirable. No partisan bias was allowed to influence

his decisions. The deliberations of the Conference were, on the whole, marked by high ability and genuine patriotism.

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An Editorial Note of 'The Amrita Bazar Patrika'
on 3. 4. 18.

The Internment Advisory Committee

The leading article of 'The Bengalee' misreads the lesson taught by the Bengal Provincial Conference at Hughly and is unfair to the younger men who on the question of the Internment Advisory Committee could not see eye to eye with the Hon'ble Mr. Surendranath Banerjea, the oldest leader of public opinion in Bengal. Mr. Banerjea's attitude towards the promise of Sir William Vincent on the question of an Advisory Committee was one of entire approval and gratitude, provided Sir William would promise a committee of three instead of two, namely, one Indian practising lawyer, an Indian Judge of a High Court and another High Court Judge. Mr. Banerjea for over a week had been insisting on a suitable '*personnel*' for the Advisory Committee and nothing else. Babu Matilal Ghosh and the younger men however thought that with the restrictions imposed by Sir William Vincent on the method of sifting the so-called evidence against the arrested persons, the promised

Advisory Committee would be not only useless but harmful.

Mr. Banerjea went so far as to warn the country against this mischievous spirit of criticism of the boon promised by Government. The younger men saw that a committee with respected Indians in it, all heavily shackled before they could start on their enquiry into the innocence or guilt of the arrested, would only serve to add prestige to an unreliable judgment based upon untested 'ex-parte' statement of witnesses, whose identity would not be disclosed to the arrested person and his friends. The result would be disastrous to innocent persons arrested. They would get neither justice nor the sympathy of their countrymen who would soon forget that the Judges were placed in a position in which justice was impossible of achievement.

Even at the meeting of the Subjects Committee of the Conference at Hughly Mr. Banerjea at first suggested thanks to the Government for the promised Advisory Committee and wanted nothing more than a proper 'personnel' for it. The younger men however led by Mr. C. R. Das pointed out that the more important factor was not the 'personnel' but the power of the Advisory Committee to make a full and fair inquiry into the truth of the 'ex parte' statement against the arrest. That power having been denied

to the promised Advisory Committee, the Committee would be, to say the least, useless. Then evidently Mr. Banerjee with the help of a younger man saw for the first time that the power claimed for the Advisory Committee was a necessity and he adopted Mr. C. R. Das's suggestion. The outstanding difference between Mr. Banerjee and the younger men was thereafter on one and one question only, namely, "would the promised Advisory Committee be ineffective without those powers?"

Mr. Banerjee having adopted the position of the younger men that the power was a necessity for the Advisory Committee, would not however subscribe to the irresistible logical conclusion therefrom. When the Subjects Committee of over a hundred delegates by a large majority adopted the proposition that without the power demanded, the promised Advisory Committee would be ineffective, Mr. Banerjee came out with the surprising announcement that he would not speak at the Conference on the resolution of Self-Government (not that of Internment, mind that), though he had promised to move that resolution.

The next day Mr. C. R. Das was unable to attend the Conference. The younger men persuaded Mr. Banerjee to attend the Conference at a late hour. A notice of amendment of the resolution on the Internment Advisory Committee adopted by the Subjects

Committee was given. The amendment took this final form, namely, "without which (powers) the Advisory Committee would be unable to discharge its duty properly." The question now was whether there was any difference between the original proposal that the Advisory Committee as promised by Sir William Vincent '*would be ineffective*' and the amendment that the Advisory Committee as promised by Sir William Vincent "would be unable to discharge its duty *properly*" Mr. Banerjee himself assured the delegates that the difference was insignificant. It was then that the supporters of the original proposal adopted by the Subjects Committee were ready to accept the amendment, if the word 'properly' was dropped.

The younger men thought that without the powers demanded the Advisory Committee could not do its duty at all. No speaker, not even Mr. Banerjee ventured to say to the delegates that the Advisory Committee could do its duty without the powers demanded for it by the Conference. The retention of the word 'properly' was supported on the ostensible ground that no Committee was expected to do its duty improperly and that there was no harm in retaining it, the difference being insignificant. Those who opposed the retention of the word 'properly' did so on the ground that it might mislead the Government to think that the Conference welcomed the Advisory

Committee without the powers demanded for it by the Conference, although that was not the position of any of the speakers who supported the retention of the word 'properly'

So, the authoritative opinion of the oldest leader, Mr. Banerjee that the 'personnel' of the Advisory Committee was the thing which mattered, was modified by the stand which the younger men took in the Subjects Committee. That was the lesson of the Conference at Hughly. As to the propriety of retaining the word 'properly' quite one half of the delegates did not vote. Of those who voted, a large majority voted for its retention on the assurance that the difference was insignificant and on the further assurance of Mr. Hirendranath Datta that it strengthened the position of the younger men on the question of the Advisory Committee. It is not necessary to enter here into the question whether the assurance was justified. But the Conference spoke unmistakably on the question whether the promised Advisory Committee without the powers demanded for it by the Conference could discharge its duty.

We congratulate the Hon'ble Mr. A. C. Datta upon the magnificent and masterly speech he has delivered as President of the Bengal Provincial Conference. The fulminations of the 'Englishman' from

day to day is proof positive of the fact that the speech had said nothing but the truth and that it has been said most effectively. Mr. Datta's election to the Presidential Chair was unanimous. There was absolutely no difference of opinion. It is no use disguising the fact that there are two well defined political parties in Bengal. It is most remarkable that Mr. Datta was nonetheless elected unanimously. An ounce of fact is worth a ton of "mischievous and misleading assertion" and vituperation. The fact that he was unanimously elected goes to shew conclusively what a unique position Mr. Datta holds in the public life of Bengal. Yet the 'Englishman' has the good taste to say that Mr. Dutt is a man unknown to fame. Does the 'Englishman' think that he can belittle the Provincial Conference by such subterfuges as these? As Mr. Surendranath Banerjee remarked, the Presidential Chair of the Bengal Conference was the highest honour which the people of Bengal could confer upon him. The people of Bengal unanimously called him to that proud Chair. It is the height of folly to speak of such a man as a man unknown to fame. One cannot conceive a more impudent assertion. Can the 'Englishman' overlook the significance of the fact that the motion of his election was moved by Mr. Banerjee and Mr. J. N. Roy on one side and the motion for vote of thanks was moved by Mr. B. Chakravarti and Babu

Matilal Ghosh on the other ? Does the 'Englishman' know that the Presidential speech of Mr. Datta has been most enthusiastically received by all shades of political opinion in the country ? But the 'Englishman' consoles himself with the observation that Mr. Datta was addressing an ignorant and credulous audience. We really do not know how to characterise such statements as these ? The meeting was not an ordinary local meeting. It was a meeting of the Conference of the entire province. All the leading people of the country were present there. No sane man could make such observation with respect to such a distinguished and respectable gathering. So much for the vituperations in which the 'Englishman' has indulged. We shall consider the merits of its observations later on.

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An Editorial Note of 'The Bengalee' on 4. 4. 18

Self-Government and Military Careers

Referring to the resolution adopted at the last session of the Bengal Provincial Conference at Hughly, urging upon Government the necessity of opening up military careers of the people of Bengal, the 'Pioneer' says that it was an interesting example of political camouillage which can scarcely fail to raise a smile of amusement from all who remember the difficulties experienced in

making up the numbers required for the Bengali Regiment and the comparative fiasco of the Indian section of the Indian Defence Force. There are of course, difficulties in the way of the formation of a Bengalee Regiment drawn from the intellectual class, seeing that for the last 150 years they have not been trained to the use of arms. Considering the class of persons forming the regiment, their claims in regard to equality of status, pay, position and prospects with those of their European comrades cannot be dismissed as extravagant. But even in spite of this, men are gladly coming forward to enlist in the Bengalee Regiment. If steps, however, be taken to meet the legitimate claims that have been put forward, it will not take long to form a Bengalee Division. As the Chairman of the Reception Committee at Hughly pointed out, the present policy of Internment is also interfering with the work of recruiting to some extent. There are thus well-founded causes the elimination of which will go far to ensure complete success for the Bengalee Regiment scheme. The 'Pioneer' speaks of the comparative fiasco of the Indian section of the Indian Defence Force. But the testimony afforded by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief at the Imperial Legislative Council does not show that there has been any fiasco. Evidently it is the wish that is father to the thought. However, the 'Pioneer' gravely

proffers the advice that "if Bengali politicians were sincere in their contention that Bengalees must join the army to prove their fitness for Home Rule, they would look facts in the face and suspending all Home Rule propaganda, would devote themselves for some time at any rate to overcoming the apathy of the majority of their compatriots towards military service in any shape or form." There are some gratuitous uncharitable assumptions in the passage just quoted which will not stand the test of scrutiny. It is supposed that Bengali politicians are not doing their bit in this respect, while as a matter of fact, their earnest co-operation has gone a great way in making for whatever success has already been achieved. It is again, taken for granted that the majority of Bengalees are averse to military service, which is not a true statement of fact. The 'Pioneer' has however, nothing to fear because the movement for Self-Government and recruiting are going hand-in-hand together for once Self-Government becomes an accomplished fact, our contemporary will see streams of people coming in to swell the ranks of the Army.

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A letter to the Editor of 'The Statesman'

Sir,

*** The Bengal Provincial Conference, unfortunately, no more represents the better mind of this

province and the saner and sober views of responsible publicists than the British Indian Association represents the masses of our people. Since the machinery of the Indian National Congress has been captured by the Extremists, the control and guidance of the Provincial Conference of Bengal have passed into the hands of Babu Matilal Ghosh and Sriman Chitta Das. You may be aware of the fact that, between these two ambitious democrats and their sorry following, they have taken upon themselves the edifying task of capturing for the ideal of Home Rule "the imagination (mind you, not the reason) of the people of Bengal." Last year Sriman Chitta, till then quite a dark horse in politics, was pitchforked into the Presidential Chair of the Bengal Provincial Conference by the vote of only half-a-dozen of interested people ; and since then, this 'infant terrible' of the Bengalee politics has been playing to the gallery and entertaining the public with a ceaseless round of antics. * * * This year, the attendance of really representative men in the Conference at Hughly has decidedly been very poor, and the moderate leaders, excepting one or two, have been conspicuous by their absence

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39, Creek Row

Calcutta, April 2, 1918

I remain, etc.

Prithwischandra Roy

